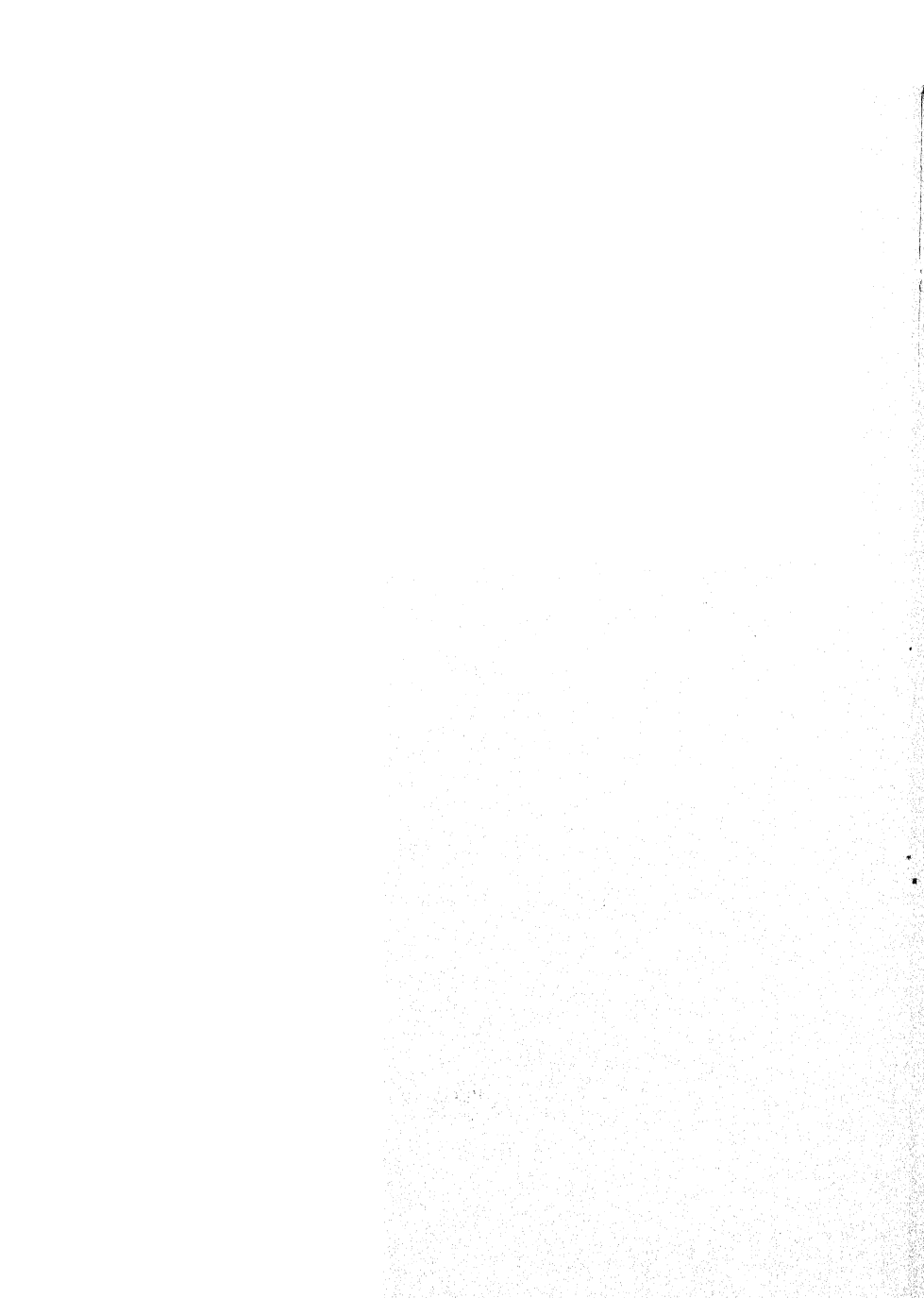


# HOW TO KNOW YOUR CHILD







# HOW TO KNOW YOUR CHILD

BY

MIRIAM FINN SCOTT



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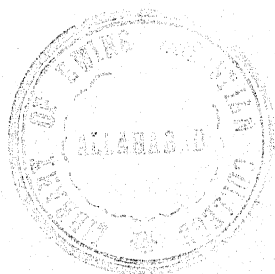
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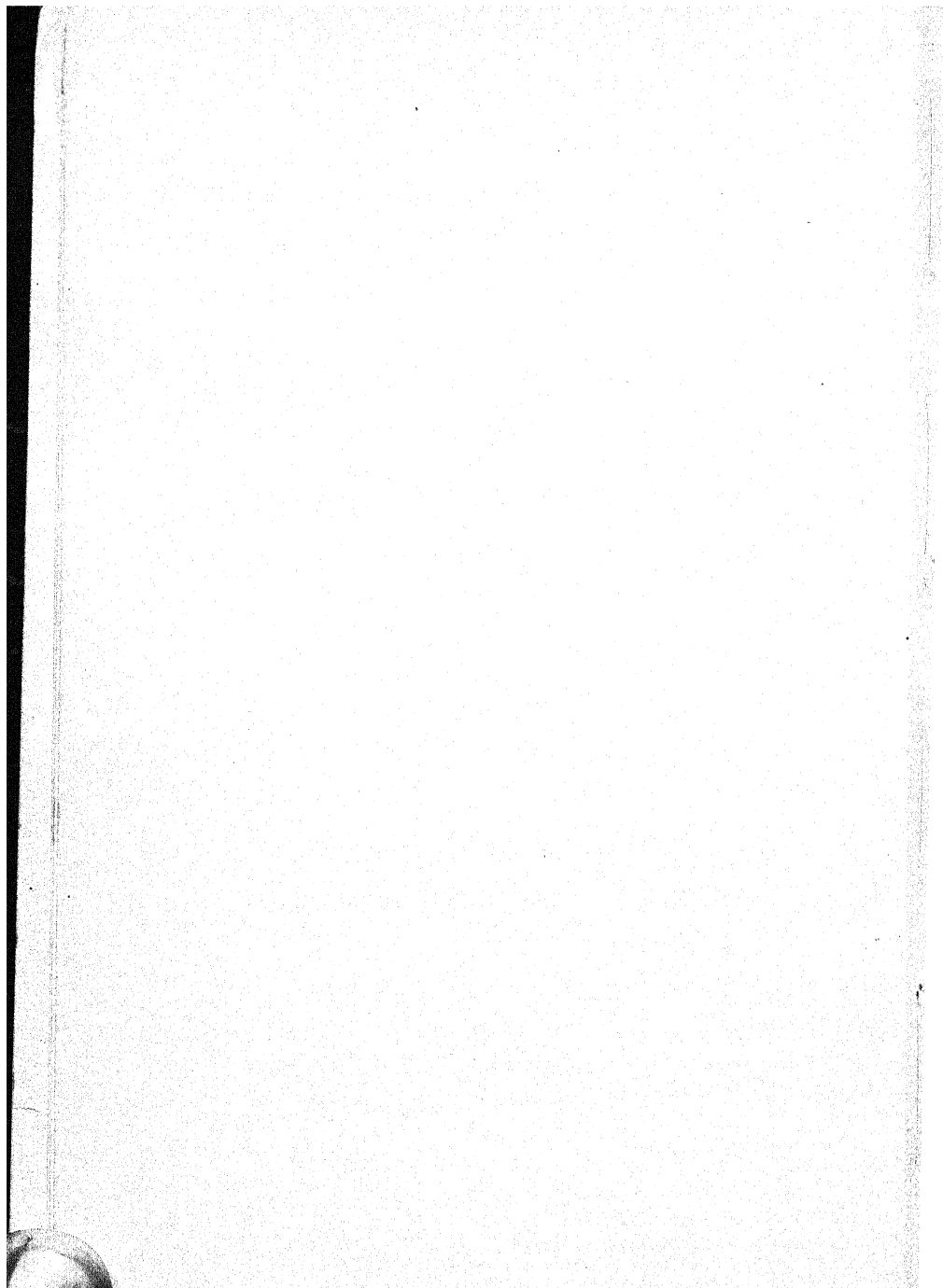
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To  
LEROY SCOTT





## PREFACE

I CAN hardly remember the time when children have not been my chief interest—yes, and my business, too. When I was myself little more than a child, I daily had charge of a thousand children on the first roof-garden playground opened in New York City; for years thereafter I had a free hand, in various educational institutions, to educate and develop the character of young children through play and through intimate personal contact with them, and at the same time had opportunity to develop and test my ideas; and more recently I have specialized, in a professional capacity, upon the development of the individual child. Thus I may almost say that I have lived my life with children. I have studied books, yes—I have in my time sat under professors; but if I have anything whatever to say that is fresh, it is what I have learned from children. They have been my

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teachers ; to alter slightly a phrase of Browning, they have opened their souls to me. And if this book has any purpose, if my life has any aim, it is to try to tell mothers and fathers what children have told me ; it is to try to interpret children to their parents ; to try to help parents see the vast riches, hitherto but dimly seen or perhaps not perceived at all, which exist unutilized in their children, and to try to help parents recognize and develop this wasted human wealth.

MIRIAM FINN SCOTT.

THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN,  
NEW YORK CITY.

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# HOW TO KNOW YOUR CHILD

## CHAPTER I

FOR MOTHERS — ABOUT MODERN EDUCATORS

CHILD training, during the last few years, has been discussed philosophically and covered from the scientist's and educator's point of view; but what I have in my preface set down as my purpose, the interpretation of children to their parents, has not as yet been done in such a way that the majority of mothers, the ninety-eight per cent. of mothers, could assimilate it and get practical results from it in their own homes.

Since I am so bold as to presume that I have here something new and fresh to con-

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tribute, I am going to be just a bit bolder, and before proceeding to the practical and concrete details of my purpose, I am going to discuss some facts and theories presented by those who in recent years have attracted much attention and who are almost responsible for child training becoming what we may nearly term a fad. To begin with, I wish to state that the fundamental philosophy of child education, attributed to the so-called modern methods which many are led to believe to be only a few years old, in reality is centuries old. To say the least, there is not a modern idea on the training of the little child that cannot be found in the Froebelian philosophy if one takes the trouble to look for it, and if one has the ingenuity and the imagination to transpose Froebel's vision of the early nineteenth century into the early twentieth. The tragedy that has happened to Froebel's philosophy has happened and is likely to happen to any philosophy, if in the interpretation and presentation of it only its form, its shell, is emphasized and its real meat, its spirit, is neglected or left out.

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We in America had no need to go across the seas to find a big modern educator, a true philosopher, one who has the clearest and the most sympathetic appreciation of the possibilities of childhood. We have such a philosopher right in our midst, and he, Professor John Dewey, has contributed as much as all the modern educators together towards the education and the training of the little child. Indeed, so true has been his insight that, though we, who were close about him, did not see and did not use his wisdom, it has travelled far beyond the seas — to the mediæval land of the Czar. In 1906, when in Russia, I found a school in Moscow, established by Tolstoy and a group of his friends, which they called "The Home for the Free Child." This school was inspired by and based upon the ideas of Professor Dewey. And in this connection I may add that during my visit with Tolstoy, John Dewey was the American in whom he showed most interest.

In studying Professor Dewey one cannot help but feel that he has the biggest truth in his ideas for child education, that his methods

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do not depend either on surroundings or materials. He sees what is the only truth — that the possibilities *are within the child*, and that the child's development depends on understanding him and *knowing him* and on how to make use of the commonplaces of his life.

There is just one primary reason why Professor Dewey, though America's greatest figure in education, does not popularly occupy the deserved position of leader of our ultra-modern methods for the training of the little child — why he is, as far as the general public is concerned, the proverbial prophet without honor in his own country. That reason is his personal modesty; a modesty so immoderately excessive that it almost amounts to a crime against humanity, for it seems to make him shrink from presenting his great ideas adequately to the world. A contributing cause to his popular non-recognition is the inability of most of us to discover things for ourselves; we need them pointed out for us; and thus far no publicity agency or commercial enterprise (unfortunately for the children

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of the country) has been keen enough to perceive Professor Dewey's value and therefore force him upon the attention of the general public.

Madame Montessori, though an infinitely smaller figure than Professor Dewey, has certainly made an invaluable contribution toward the better training of the child — and she has made this contribution chiefly because of the comparatively unimportant qualities and opportunities which Professor Dewey has lacked. She has a personality — and this is a great gift — which appeals to the popular mind and lends itself to an easy publicity; her work had taken a form which makes good “copy” for authors of books and newspaper and magazine writers; and she had the fortune to be taken up and be widely exploited before the public. This is not said in her dispraise; quite otherwise. It is said chiefly to point out why a lesser educator from overseas has made a wider popular impression in America than our own much wiser and more profound educator.

Madame Montessori's greatest contribu-

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tion is that, through the publicity which has been given her, she has aided incalculably in awakening parents and teachers to the fact that they are not doing one quarter what they should do with the young lives in their hands. Even if Madame Montessori's method had not directly contributed towards the richer education of children, which it has, this awakening the public mind towards a greater responsibility to the little child is a service large enough in itself to warrant her having place as one of the most useful women of our age. But in justice to her, one must say more than this in her behalf, for it is only when compared with the ideas of Professor Dewey that her ideas seem of secondary importance. From very close study of Madame Montessori's work, from hearing her speak and observing her, one is convinced that she is a woman of big soul and big spirit — indeed, a genius — and that she does not need any special material or any special environment to secure results with children. Her personality, her spirit, are quite enough to inspire and stimulate the development of the

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very best in the little child. It is not chiefly her new method that has achieved results; hers is the old story of the magnetic, inspiring personality that lifts people above established routine and moves them to see the soul of things.

But from observation, I already begin to feel that in her case, as in the case of Froebel, her disciples and pupils are putting too much emphasis on the shell of her work, and too little on its kernel. With a very few exceptions, as it is now practised in America, the Montessori method consists largely in dependence upon sets of materials; and anybody who truly knows children and who has intelligently worked with children is aware that no amount of material and no perfection of material can alone develop the most and best in every child. Since the emphasis has come to be laid on the material, the average parent who has not the time or the training to study Madame Montessori's own work, and who depends on popular reports, gathers that once you possess a set of Montessori material your work is all but done. This

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dependence on materials has unfortunately begun to develop in some parents a feeling almost equivalent to that which a popular advertising slogan has begotten among buyers of cameras: "You press the button, we do the rest." So many dollars across a counter — result, a perfect child. This situation, so contrary to the spirit of Madame Montessori, has been the great tragedy of the Montessori method.

Other persons have come forward with new angles and new theories on the education of the young. "Natural Education" is one of the newest of these new theories — and is one that has secured very wide, almost sensational, publicity in some localities. Its author is doubtless a woman of great ability and one who probably has personally all the gifts of a good teacher; and she has without doubt accomplished wonders with her own child. But her interpretation and presentation of her own methods are to the average mind so complex, so unnatural, and even so grotesque, that instead of being an inspiration and a stimulus her method is inevitably



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discouraging. There is no denying that one child in several thousand can be taught by "Natural Education" by one mother in several thousand, but a method that contains so small a percentage of practicability and hope is not one that can be expected to appeal to the average earnest mother.

"Organic Education" is another method, excellent in itself, and practicable with certain children under certain environments. Particularly is it an excellent method under the personal direction of so gifted a woman as its exponent, Mrs. Johnson. But one who is familiar with city conditions must perceive that the problems of children in large cities cannot be adequately handled with the organic system of education.

All these women have, in varying degrees, made valuable contributions toward the training of the young child. But for the greatest, and soundest, and most lasting impetus to present-day training of children — I cannot help repeating myself on this point — I am looking forward to the time when John Dewey may step out of his hiding-place and

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present his ideas to the world in appealing form and with the big convincingness which they deserve. For John Dewey is the master of all moderns.

It is to a different audience I address myself than the audience which I feel the women to whom I have referred have mainly reached; for I feel that these women have, in the main, been especially helpful to those mothers who would doubtless have done their best anyhow for their children — the mothers who already realize the tremendous responsibility of the new race in their hands. I should like to reach all mothers, to be sure; but in this volume it is of the average mother that I am particularly thinking, the mother who has had an average schooling, who has an average income; and I am thinking, too, of the mother even below this average, who has had little training and education, but who is naturally intelligent and who has just as keen sensibilities and desires and ambitions for her children as those who have had more fortunate opportunities. It is to them that I wish to make clear, in the first place, that

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they, as parents, have it in their power, in their hands, either to make or to break the lives of their children. It is to them I want to carry the truth Ellen Key so beautifully expresses, that "to bring up a child is carrying one's soul in one's hand." It is to them that I wish to point the simplest way to make the most of their children, to help them to understand the child, his powers, his possibilities, his needs. It is to them that I want to point out the importance of the first years, the tenderest, the most formative period of the child's life; to show how the common-places, what we consider the trivial things, affect him, how these very same common-places can be made to serve him and develop him; and how through a new attitude toward the little child the mother can not only vastly improve her child over what he otherwise would be, but by so doing can make the most of herself and of her life, and bring to herself a greater happiness and to society a greater service.

## CHAPTER II

### DISCOVERING A HUMAN CONTINENT

THE teacher expressed her refusal as gently as she could.

"I am very sorry," she said, after completing the examination of a four-and-a-half-year-old child whose training I had directed — an examination which she had made out of politeness, but obviously with a predetermined decision. "She's a very bright little girl, but she's far too young for one of our regular classes. Why not apply for a place for her in the kindergarten?"

But I persisted, for I knew the little girl was advanced far beyond kindergarten work. "Suppose," I suggested at last, "that you take her on trial. If she fails to keep up with the class, then I'll withdraw her without a word the very moment you send me notice."

By my persistence I got this proposal referred to the principal. Fortunately, she was

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liberal in her educational theories and was willing to experiment, and in the end the child was admitted on probation among children who were, most of them, two or three years older than herself.

What I had known would happen did happen. After a brief period she was doing the class-work easily and with pleasure. As for reading, in which I had thought it advisable to hold her back, she seemed suddenly to "burst" into it. Before her first school year was over she one day leaned against the shoulder of her father, who was examining a typewritten document, and inquired, "What are you reading, father?" and then, without waiting for a reply, proceeded in a matter-of-fact way to read the document aloud, not stumbling over the long words, though of course she did not know their meaning.

After a year of easy, joyous work she was promoted.

"That child has upset my theories of education!" exclaimed her teacher—the one who had originally examined and refused her, and one of the most advanced, intelligent

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and sympathetic teachers it has been my good fortune to meet. But, unfortunately, the open-mindedness of the school authorities was not shared by my neighbors. Said one mother solicitously: "Don't you think you are forcing that child too much? She is just a baby." And another mother contended, "Oh, well, she is an exception — unusual both in mind and body."

Now, as a matter of fact, this child, in natural endowments, is not an exception. Nor is she being forced. What she has done, *any child* of good average intelligence can do — if given the proper training.

The proper training! Exactly here is the trouble. We have not given this to our children — no more than it was given us by our parents. We have accepted the inherited theory that the education and training of our children — except in a few matters, such as obedience and manners — are to be begun at nine A.M., sharp, on the ringing of a school-bell some September morning about the time they are five or six years old. We have overlooked — have not looked for — the qualities

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and opportunities for development inherent in children in that period between birth and the first school-day.

It has not been our fault that we have allowed these qualities and opportunities to go to waste. It has been due to our ignorance, ignorance which we inherited and out of which the world advances with pitiful slowness. Up to the eighteenth century childhood was generally looked upon, by adults, as an unfortunate but inescapable period that had somehow to be endured. In our own parents' day knowledge of the child and its faculties and of how they should be handled was popularly non-existent; child-training, as a thoughtful and practical program, was as much in the womb of the future as was the aeroplane.

Even in our own time, though parents are usually affectionate enough and joyously furnish the infant with an abundance of elaborate clothes and the child with a prodigality of toys, most of them ignore the souls and minds of their children without being conscious that they are doing so. For it is just

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today that we have really begun to discover that the period lying between birth and six or seven years of age is the most valuable area in all the territory of a human life. Here is a new human continent — hitherto neglected, still uncharted, but recognized at last as an El Dorado of future happiness.

During this ordinarily uncultivated, or little cultivated, period of the child's life, the human faculties — curiosity, imagination, originality, initiative, will-power, desire for self-dependence, desire for physical and mental activity — begin to bud and have their first growth. When we ignore, or suppress, or improperly handle these qualities, the result is under-development, or a stunting, twisting, crippling of the child, with result that our children fall far short of what they might be, and should be, and grow up to be less happy, less effective and less useful men and women than they have a right to be. I claim, with full appreciation of what I am saying, that every normal child of six would be happier and healthier, and be at least one-third farther advanced in his physical and



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intellectual development, and be started toward a far better maturity, if only these qualities ordinarily wasted were properly used. Here is our greatest problem and our greatest hope — to guide and direct and make the best possible use of our children's natural forces — to try to begin to *save this vast human waste*.

To return to the specific case of the child mentioned in the beginning. "How did you develop her beyond the average child of her age, without 'forcing' her?" many of you may ask. The full answer to that question is this book dealing with my experience in training children. But I may briefly answer here that I began by first recognizing the value of the budding faculties to which I have previously referred. As the second half of my answer, I may say that for the development of these faculties I did not seek expensive and elaborate materials, but made use of the ordinary activities of her life, and of every child's life — her bathing, dressing, eating, playing, going to bed. These routine acts are ordinarily never even thought of as

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having any value in training a child, yet they are richer in possibilities than the most costly and complex method or outfit of materials that can be thrust into the child's life from the *outside*. For these activities are already in the child's life; they concern him more than anything else, they are always touching him, always influencing him; in brief, they *are his life*.

What I did with Mary in the matter of dressing, and how I turned this to educational value, will be suggestive of what I did with other of her routine activities.

The normal child, from the moment he realizes that he has hands and feet, has the keenest desire to make use of them. From the time Mary started to grasp and pull at things, I realized that these were not symptoms which called for suppression or diversion or pacification; I realized that they were signals of the demand of her growing energies for exercise, for work. I recognized that Mary was begging in sign language, as it were, for an opportunity to make use of her powers. And so, instead of letting these

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precious energies and forces go to waste through suppression or become perverted through irritation, I tried to save them by giving them a legitimate outlet for activity, and one of the first mediums I used was that bug-bear of so many mothers and children, dressing. I made dressing a game, and I found that Mary could get as much pleasure out of it as children do from exploring the inner mysteries of father's watch, or dipping their fingers in the ink-well and making gleeful hieroglyphics on the wall.

In the first place, I reduced Mary's clothes to the fewest possible. There is no reason why the ordinary clothing of all children, until at least the age of six, should consist of anything more than stockings, shoes, garters, rompers, and such underwear as the season requires. In dressing Mary — this particular training I began before she was two — I put her on a bed or couch, with her things within her reach and in the order in which she was to put them on. I would take up the little shirt, hold the right sleeve ready and say, "This is for Mary's right arm," and like-

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wise with the left sleeve. Then I would hold up the little drawers in the same way, saying, "Right leg," "left leg"; the same with the rompers; and with the shoes, "right foot," "left foot."

Naturally Mary at first did not know even the names of the parts of her body, or the right foot from the left, but by holding up the right sleeve near the right arm, and by looking suggestively at the sleeve and then at the arm, in a very little while she began to understand the relation and what action should follow. In playing this game of dressing I put as much game spirit into it as if I were playing a game of tag or hide-and-seek. I used a playful tone of voice, I varied the pauses. I would say, "Right — foot," "left foot." I varied the order of the commands — perhaps first left and then right, and vice versa.

After a few game-lessons of that kind I found that Mary was able to do most of this promptly, and I was ready with something new. "Mary, now we are going to play a surprise game. I will close my eyes, and you

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put on the rompers all by yourself. I will say, 'right leg,' 'left leg,' 'right arm,' 'left arm,' and when you have it on you say, 'Ready!'" This game of dressing so stimulated her interest that it became one of the pleasurable events of the day, and before very long she demanded that she be allowed to dress herself.

After Mary learned how to put on her clothes the buttoning of them came next. "Here comes Mr. Button through the buttonhole," I would say playfully and show her how to help Mr. Button make the journey. I would put the button sideways into the buttonhole with one hand and pull it through with the other. "How do you do, Mr. Button!" I would exclaim. Mary was much amused and asked me to do it again and again, and then asked to do it herself.

Of course in all these games of dressing and buttoning I used my best judgment. I did not allow the task to become too long or too tiresome. While Mary was putting on one part of her clothes I would help her with another part; while she was buttoning a few

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buttons in the front I would quietly button some in the back. When she acquired more skill in buttoning and unbuttoning she became so fascinated with it that she would button and unbutton the twelve buttons on her two shoes twice before she was ready to leave them alone, and it was her chief joy and special privilege to button "mother's shoes" and "father's coat," and other things within reach that had buttons and button-holes. After this the fastening of snaps, the hooking of hooks and eyes, and the lacing of shoes, followed with as much interest and as much pleasure. And at an unusually early age Mary was able to dress herself completely, except for those always exasperating buttons in the small of the back.

This game of dressing, this utilizing of opportunities commonly wasted, not only prevents all the irritation that usually comes through dressing both to the child and to the mother, but it brings real joy to the child, and to the mother hours for leisure or other duties. While the child is dressing herself the mother has an opportunity to make beds,

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tidy up the rooms, or attend to other household matters. And, more important, in Mary's case, it taught her the names of parts of her body, the names of the various articles of clothing she used; it gave her an opportunity to gain control of her body, it taught her to use her hands and fingers, it gave her the first lessons in coördination, and it helped to cultivate in her the habit of depending upon herself.

I may here remark that I find absolutely no danger in introducing at a very early age the necessary accessories to dressing, provided they are used properly. Mary had a great deal more pleasure in using her buttonhook to button her shoes than she would have had in using it as an instrument of torture upon herself. She learned the use of her toothbrush, nail-file, and comb and brush. Such toilet articles are a danger only when the child is not, from the beginning, taught their proper uses.

Similarly, I made Mary's eating a means for her training. As a fundamental principle, I tried to have her food as simple as possible

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—cooked cereals, fruit, eggs, bread and butter, milk, simple meats, and vegetables. I was careful to have variety in the food, and I was most careful to have it served as neatly and as attractively as possible. It is far more important to have the little child's meal regularly and attractively served than the adult's, because here is a splendid natural opportunity for the child to acquire taste, orderliness, and regularity. Mary had her own table and chair, where she sat comfortably and where things could be within her reach; she had her own simple, attractive dishes, strong, not too heavy, and decorated with flowers or fruits; and she had, as all children should have, her own knife, fork, and spoon.

As far as possible she was allowed to set her own table, carrying in from the kitchen to her table in the dining room her own pitcher of milk, her bread-and-butter plate, her glass of water, with rarely an accident. When she would insist on doing the more difficult errands herself I would say, "Mary, this is too hot or too heavy for you to carry,"



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and if she still persisted in doing the thing herself I would warn her of the consequences, give her her wish, and if the inevitable happened and a favorite plate or bowl was broken, Mary learned her lesson better than from any number of "don'ts."

From the time she began to sit at the table she was taught to sit properly and to use her knife, fork, and spoon correctly; she learned to pass things and ask for things courteously, and as she was encouraged to use her very best manners at her own table there was no need ever to teach her company manners. If there was any conversation while eating it usually centered on the objects which at that moment most interested her — where the milk, the butter, the eggs, the potatoes, came from, or how bread is made; she learned the taste, color, odor, and temperatures of our food; and all this casually acquired information opened great worlds of interest to Mary.

Just as I did with dressing and eating, so I did with all the other routine acts of Mary's early childhood; and particularly with play.

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Fifteen years' experience with thousands of children, trying to train and educate them through their games and their play instinct, has convinced me that the average mother — average in education and affection — does not realize a hundredth part of the rich possibilities of this single phase of a child's life. These things may seem trivial, but they are not; yet even if they were, it is often out of the little things that the great things are made. From all these ordinarily wasted everyday acts which make up a young child's life, I extracted their pleasure-giving and educational values; I recognized and made use of the natural instincts of the child as they unfolded; with the result that the child developed observation, a sense of order, self-dependence, initiative, and the perseverance to carry through any work undertaken; emotional strength and its control, and a control of her body and all its members which enabled her to use naturally and with ease pencil and pen, drawing-crayons, paint-brushes, scissors, needles, hammers, saws, and planes, when the time came to put these

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implements into her hands. She had been taught by everyday life; and from life she had learned so much that she was not only ready for schoolroom education much earlier than the average child, but she was eager for it, and it presented to her no unusual difficulties.

To drive the point home by repeating it once more, this is just making intelligent and happy use of wasted faculties and wasted opportunities. That is all.

"Yes, it is all very well to train your child from his earliest years when he is well and strong," many a mother has said to me. "But to me the most important thing is my child's health."

My answer to such mothers is that it is this very training, this establishing of regular physical habits, this giving a child's faculties full and developing activity that lays the very foundation of the child's good health, as well as the foundation of his character and mind. Half of the child's diseases, and all the irritation and anxiety that go with them, would disappear if only we could recognize the in-

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fluence this early training has upon his development. From the first day of the child's existence (provided, of course, the child is normal, and science has proved that with proper care all children should be born normal) he should be properly started in the matter of his food, sleep, rest, and all physical habits.

To do this requires no more time and energy than are continually being spent on the infant to-day; but it does require thought and persistence and self-control on the part of the mother or the adult who is in immediate contact with the child. It is the neglect of these first laws in the care of the child that is responsible for the innumerable young mothers whom giving birth to a child has made prematurely old, nervously wrecked, and mentally stagnant, instead of being to them a supreme experience which should have developed and ennobled them in every sense, making them more sympathetic, happier, richer in nature, more efficient.

I should be less than honest, and I should fall far short of realizing the full importance

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of the problem that confronts parents, if I did not state that to make the most of childhood we must have normal living conditions, we must be relieved of the pressure of that terrific monster, Poverty, which hampers and stunts and maims so many of us. However vital and important as this hard matter of dollars and cents is I can only touch upon it here incidentally. What more immediately concerns us is that there is a large percentage of parents who need no instantaneous revolution of their material conditions as a preliminary to making more of their children's faculties; and many of us who are less fortunately placed can do better with and for our children if we can only bring ourselves to see and make use of the vast wealth that lies undeveloped in these early years.

But fair warning should be given to all. There is no easy method of cultivating this newly discovered continent of early childhood, no easy method of developing the child to his full potential stature of maturity. There are no magic cures, no short cuts, no royal roads. We must be prepared and will-

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ing to give time, patience, persistence, labor; or we must be in a position to see that these are wisely given by others. We must recognize that in training our child it is not just one set of muscles, or one set of traits, that we are striving to develop toward perfection; but that we are seeking to train everything that makes up the human being — each faculty to work, first, properly by itself, and then to coördinate with all other elements in harmonious activity. We must realize that, except where we begin with infants, old habits and standards must often be uprooted before new ones can be established, and that this takes time; we must realize that the establishing of these new habits, as a natural part of the child's being, may require long and patient repetition. And we must be prepared for little, or very slow, response, for discouragements, and for set-backs.

It is hard. But great results do not come without great effort, and the effort of today becomes worth while a thousand times over if we keep before our eyes the glorious goal, the radiant vision of a vastly richer child-

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hood, a vastly richer, happier, more competent maturity!

In any thorough effort to make of your child the maximum of what it is in him to be, the most important preliminary of all is *how to know your child*—how to know his temperament, his gifts, his weaknesses, his personality, all the qualities that make him different from other children.

Is your child obstinate? Capricious? Wilful? Mischievous? Of a violent temper? Spiritless? Shy? Unquestioningly obedient? Imaginative? Imitative? Independent? Generous? Affectionate? Do you know what are the qualities behind these manifestations?—and do you know how they can be most wisely treated? Not for a moment must we forget that a trait which on the surface seems to us obnoxious may perhaps, at its source, be one of the finest of human instincts, which, somehow, has become pitiably distorted—and which is still capable of restoration to beauty and use.

At the very beginning of our endeavor we must put out of our minds, forever, the help-

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less, hopeless statement which we so often hear, that children are born good or bad. The best of modern criminologists tell us that even the high percentage of criminality which seems to remain unchanged through the centuries does not prove the inherited character of criminality; they tell us that this apparently inherited criminality may be attributed to the unfortunate forces of environment and examples that smothered the good impulses before they had opportunity to develop. If this is true of what we call "crime", then it is just as true of the less extreme acts of a disordered nature. We must get it into our minds, hard, that it is strictly up to us; that our children are *what we make them* — but to make the most of them, *we must know them*.

*How to know your child* — this is the compass, yes, and the ship, to this newly discovered human continent; and, one might add, to that illimitable, incalculable world of one hundred per cent. human development.



## CHAPTER III

### HOW TO KNOW YOUR CHILD

MUCH of the unhappiness and underdevelopment that exist in the world today may be traced back to one significant, basic fact of childhood: mothers, generally, do not truly *know* their children; and this is true quite irrespective of the great bond of love, parental and filial, that binds the two together. Our own parents, speaking generally, *did not know us*. And most of us present-day young mothers *do not know our children*. Obviously, if we wish to develop our children to their highest capacity — and every mother does — if we wish to help our children to be a full one hundred per cent. of what it is in them to be, then our fundamental problem, our first working principle, becomes *How to know our children*. Plainly we can not proceed intelligently about the training of our children

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until first we see clearly what it is that we are trying to train. Otherwise, we work in the dark; we may apply disastrous remedies; we may maim our children.

For centuries we have assumed that once we are parents it must follow that we know our children. As if the mere physiological experience of parenthood automatically equipped us with a full knowledge of child nature, and with full power to give the child the best training! This absurdity has been handed down to us for so long that the majority of us mothers, no matter how ignorant we are in the higher duties of motherhood, — and many of us will confess, if we are honest with ourselves, that not until we became mothers did we give one serious thought to a little child, — no matter how unskilled and unfit we are to train our children, instinctively we resent any suggestion as to how to handle our children. The mother who answered, "I buried nine, I ought to know how to bring up my boy," is perhaps an extreme example, but nevertheless illustrates the too-frequent attitude of mothers.

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"A mother's hand," "a mother's instinct," "a mother's love" — for generations these things have been romanticized and sentimentalized about, and most of what has been said is pretty nonsense. True, the qualities behind these favorite phrases are wonderful qualities, but to make them of value to the child, and hence of value to the race, they must be cultivated. To them must be added knowledge and intelligence. "A mother's love" alone is no more preparation for the intelligent training of the little child than the "born doctor's" natural aptitude is sufficient preparation for operating on your child. With honest and open minds, and with reverent souls, we must approach this infinitely noble and serious business of being mothers — and try to learn — and learn of our own children.

"Ruth is wearing me out, she is a terror, absolutely unmanageable. No nurse will stay with her," a desperate mother told me, and she added that she had tried every conceivable method of control, of restraint, of punishment, upon Ruth to get her to

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behave, but all seemed to be without effect.

I had an opportunity to study and observe the six-year-old Ruth, and finally to direct her training for a period, and I found nothing abnormal or vicious about the little girl. Here was a plain case where a devoted mother in her anxiety to make the most of her child had deliberately gone to work to crush the best in her simply because *she did not know her*.

How Ruth's case was handled, how her difficulties were solved and how this ugly duckling turned out to be the swan of the family, may be suggestive, first, of how to go about to know your child, how to find out who and what your child is; and second, of how to handle the conditions and the qualities you discover in the child. The program followed with Ruth may not be applicable as a whole to any other case, but the method used in observing her can be used on any normal child under the simplest home conditions.

From intimate talks with Ruth's mother

## HOW TO KNOW YOUR CHILD

I learned about Ruth's life at home, about her physical habits, about her sleeping, eating, resting. One can not over-emphasize, or repeat too often, the importance of these fundamentals on a child's entire life. Countless disorders can be traced back to careless physical habits established in early childhood. I learned that Ruth ate little and without pleasure, that she was coaxed or threatened into eating, that she was continuously being reminded about her table manners. I learned that she was extremely nervous, cried often; that she was wilful, and that unless she had her way she pinched, kicked, and struck people around her and destroyed objects about the house; that she had to be watched all the time for fear that she would cause serious trouble to others or herself.

When I first saw Ruth, who came with her mother when she called on me, she appeared all her mother had described her to be. She seemed like a wild animal caught in a trap. She hardly looked at me, and when she did it was with suspicion and

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noticeable hostility. From the mother's own story I had gathered that to Ruth adults existed but for one purpose, to watch and check her. To Ruth I naturally seemed just one additional person to keep her down. I saw that the first step was to remove from her the sense of adult domination, to calm her alert hostility.

I assumed an attitude of total indifference toward her; I acted as though she were not in the room; I made no remarks to her or about her — I talked to her mother upon matters that could not possibly interest Ruth. For a while Ruth stood almost still, with her back against a window and her eyes on me, as if on guard to defend herself against any advance on my part. I continued to ignore her, until I realized that her suspicion and hostility were less tense. I then suggested to the mother, with the hope of interesting Ruth, to come into my play-room, and casually remarked that if Ruth wanted to see the playthings she could come also. I did not press Ruth, did not even repeat the invitation. We started

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for the room. As I had foreseen, Ruth soon followed.

In the room, where games, toys, books, and various working-materials were arranged on shelves within Ruth's reach, I consciously showed the mother such games and materials as might particularly interest Ruth. I placed a game of Ring Toss on the floor and demonstrated, apparently to the mother but in simple language directed at Ruth, how the game was to be played, and casually suggested to Ruth that she could play with it if she wished. I also showed the mother where the balls were kept, where the crayons and papers were; I pointed to the blackboard and box of colored chalk. Then the mother and I went into the adjoining room and Ruth remained in the play-room quite at liberty to do as she pleased.

This allowing the child freedom of action, in so far as such freedom does not seriously interfere with the rights of other people, is the first principle to practise in trying to know your child. All of us are most natural, are nearer being our actual selves, when we

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are free of the domination of other persons' orders. The child who is permitted to follow the promptings of his own nature will by his actions give you clues, even definite information, to his real personality, to his good qualities, his undesirable qualities, his limitations. There is no better opportunity to study a child than at play, whether he plays in his own home or in the open. Play is the child's natural occupation; it is his work, his life. Through it he expresses all of himself — his mind, his body, his soul. And if you can observe your child in his play from day to day, and get to understand what his play means, then you are on the high road toward knowing your child.

When I noticed that Ruth had become interested in the things about her I quietly asked the mother to withdraw, and I remained at a desk in my room at a convenient angle to study Ruth unobserved. Ruth began to examine the various articles on the shelves, to take down boxes of games and toys, to look at books, to open drawers and closets. The thing that struck me first about Ruth was



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that she was clumsy with her hands and feet; she practically had no control over them. Though the objects were not too heavy for her to handle and were within easy reach, she dropped or upset almost everything she touched. In trying, for instance, to pick up some beads, a box of which she overturned, she could hardly hold more than two or three beads at a time without letting them roll out of her hands; she had great difficulty in opening and closing boxes. All this indicated that she was not practised in handling things.

Another point very noticeable about Ruth was that she changed with great rapidity from one thing to another, without stopping, in some cases, long enough to see what each separate object was. She seemed nervously eager to keep moving. This clearly indicated to me that she had not acquired the habit of centering her interest on one thing at a time, that she had no power of concentration. She did not replace the games in their respective boxes, or the boxes on the shelves — which made

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clear to me that she had no sense of order and no sense of responsibility. All these weaknesses, these faults, *were not inherent*. They pointed directly at neglected training.

When she came to the game of Ring Toss she surprised me by playing at it for a long while — until it was time for her to go home. Although she did not once get a ring on the stake, the mere running after the rings seemed to provide sufficient pleasure to keep her interested in the game. It was clear that she enjoyed the physical demand the game made upon her — that one positive virtue she had was physical energy.

Another day, unexpected to Ruth, I came upon her in the park where she and her nurse spent the afternoons. I approached unobserved by both but within distance to hear the nurse vigorously reproofing Ruth for going beyond the bench where the nurse was sitting embroidering a worthless doily. I picked up a ball and announced to the young children about me in the park that those who wished to play could join my game. I started a spirited game of catch.

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I then changed it to another game, where every child was given the name of a day of the week and the children had to catch the ball as I called their day. All these games required alertness, intelligence, energy, and muscular control, and afforded opportunity to study the children's social spirit.

At first Ruth stood back and assumed the same defensive attitude as in my play-room. It was noticeably hard for her to mix with the other children. I did not urge her, but when I realized that she had relaxed and was ready, without asking questions (which so often cause children further embarrassment), I said, in a very playful manner, "Now, Ruth, you are 'Monday,' and just you look out when the ball comes your way." Instead of calling Monday I called Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Ruth enjoyed and understood the fun of it, and when I finally called "Monday" she was ready and ran with evident pleasure after the ball. After this she entered with spirit into all the games we played.

The more I saw of Ruth the less I agreed

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with her mother's description of her as a hopelessly wild and refractory child, and the more I realized how little the mother knew of her. Ruth was not meant to become a colorless, sweet little girl who kept her clothes always clean and her hair-ribbon in a perfect bow. She had distinct personality, keen intelligence, and marvellous physical energy, all splendid qualities with which to develop a normal, efficient, happy, and happiness-giving person. What she needed was merely a legitimate opportunity for exercising her powers, a sympathetic but firm and just handling, and not the sort of repressive arbitrary training her well-meaning mother, with the help of that pathetically helpless, ignorant nursemaid who acted as a private policeman to the little girl, tried to give her.

After you have made a sincere effort to know your child — after you have observed him, studied him, under conditions natural to him, in the routine acts of his daily life, in his world of play — after you have tried to understand what this or that

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act may mean, and thought what this or that germ of a trait may indicate—you will begin to see with some degree of clearness how to handle your child and help to develop the best in him. Perhaps you will discover, as I did in Ruth's case, that often the proper handling means "hands off."

It was obvious that Ruth's nervousness, irritability, and viciousness were merely ugly, wasteful explosions of her suppressed energy and intelligence. And right here is perhaps the commonest home-made poison for childhood. One of the greatest causes of the problems of childhood is arbitrary suppression. But I want it clearly understood that when I plead for freedom I do not mean "Do as you please"; I mean freedom from undue direction, from undue pressure, from undue restriction, freedom to develop naturally under thoughtful guidance.

I will give here only such recommendations made in Ruth's case as will be suggestive of how to handle the more or less common problems of childhood. I suggested in the first place that she be given

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a chance to play more freely, even if that meant her taking some small risks, such as tripping, falling, scratching, and bumping her arms. As a matter of fact, children are far more able to look after themselves than we adults know. I recommended that Ruth be stimulated to play games which would give her an opportunity to utilize her energies in a constructive way. Through such games she would acquire skilful use of her feet, hands, eyes, her whole body; and the more she would use her energy in vigorous, developing play, the less would she have left to waste in anger and in temper.

I demanded that she be provided with educational material to suit her intelligence. This holding back of information from a child when, despite his years, he is ready for it, is as wicked and harmful as forcing information upon him when he is not prepared for it. I required that, with the material, simple tools be introduced, such as scissors, needles, hammer and saw and nails, which would further help to develop the skilful use of her hands. I asked that she

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be interested and encouraged to do as much as possible for herself at home, to learn to depend upon herself, to dress herself, to wait upon herself and look after her own games and toys. And I particularly asked that she be corrected as little as possible, since continual nagging often serves merely to confuse the child, and causes him to react in the opposite direction. I asked that only serious faults be noted and corrected, and these with sympathy and with firmness. And that these recommendations and suggestions be introduced into Ruth's daily life most gradually, so that Ruth would hardly notice their introduction.

For weeks there were practically no results. Ruth remained the same uncontrollable little girl. In the beginning it was a constant, apparently hopeless struggle; but the mother had been warned from the start that results would come slowly, she understood, and despite frequent discouragement she persisted in giving this new method a fair chance. After a period of three months results were noticeable.

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"I can hardly believe she is the same child; she is happy, and gives no trouble," said her mother a year later; "and I can hardly believe I am the same mother. Ruth has taught me so much. And all of it seems so simple now — just put yourself in the child's place."

To put yourself in the child's place, to be a child again, that indeed is the only way of knowing your child. The greatest educators have been those who, with the rich knowledge and experience of maturity, have been best able to assume the spirit of a child and to see life from the child's point of view. Put yourself in your child's place, try to be him, try to realize his attitude towards persons and conditions about him, try to feel his desires, his impulses and his ambitions. Doing this may bring you a revelation; you may discover qualities which you never dreamt existed; you may thus begin to learn who and what your child is.

After you have realized that mother-love does not automatically make one omniscient, after you have put yourself in your child's



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place, you have perhaps discovered a bewildering number of traits, and you may be asking yourself, what does this one and that one mean, and what am I going to do about it? More than likely the traits you most frequently observed were various manifestations of selfishness; and since this article can cover but a fraction of the ground, selfishness is perhaps our most suggestive good-and-bad example.

We must realize that while selfishness may exhibit itself in most unpleasant ways, the instinct from which it springs is entirely normal. We must recognize that the whole activity of the infant is instinctively selfish; that is, the child is controlled by the needs and desires of his own body, and he strives to gratify them with naïve inconsideration of others. These impulses are primarily only the impulses for self-preservation. They are, and should be regarded as, a great part of the raw material out of which the child's character is to be built.

In our search for selfishness we must be alert to note and understand every little

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act—for if our minds are open the most trifling of everyday incidents can be as illuminating and powerfully significant to us as the climax of an Ibsen drama. At a children's party given by a mother who was earnestly endeavoring to afford every child an equal share of happiness, my attention was caught in particular by a bright boy of seven who seemed to have remarkable charm of manners. But presently I noted that his interest in games lasted only so long as he was the leading figure in them. As soon as his turn was over he demanded that the game be changed. At the end of the afternoon he confessed that he did not have a good time at all. I asked him why. "Oh," he explained with childish frankness, "it is no fun to have to wait your turn; besides, there were no prizes given out."

Here was a boy of splendid natural material, whose primitive instinct had obviously been permitted to develop at the expense of all his better social instincts. His fine manners which at first had charmed me were only of the surface; beneath their

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pretty and misleading show, the boy was selfishness incarnate. He exemplified how manners may be drilled into a child and become merely a bit of external decoration, and be no indication of character or feelings.

Often we fond mothers see in our children regrettable traits which we entirely mistake; and our treatment is as wise and efficacious as administering quinine for a broken leg. "Harold is very nervous, poor child, and afflicted with a high-strung temperament with which we must be very careful," a mother told me.

A moment later Harold came bursting into the room where we sat talking. "Where is my ball, mother?" he shouted.

"I don't know, Harold," she answered.

"But I want it!" he declared.

"I will look for it a little later."

"But I want it *now*!" he demanded, stamping his foot. And that he might not be irritated into one of his "fits," off went his mother to look for that ball.

I had further opportunity to study Harold. This affectionate mother knew her son about

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as well as she knew the remotest Hottentot. The trouble was with the boy's early training. He was naturally very strong physically and had a definite personality. His fond mother accepted his babyish aggressiveness, in itself an excellent trait, as something cute and smart. Through her lack of understanding him, the mother, instead of curbing her child and developing his aggressiveness into valuable constructive channels, indulged him, and encouraged him to use all his fine strength for his own gratification — with the very natural result that at six Harold was a thoroughly undisciplined, self-centered, self-seeking little boy.

What should Harold's mother have done after she had come really to know her child? With a well-developed case of pure selfishness in a child of six or seven, one is justified in using the firmest methods — though always the utmost patience and tact should be used not to injure the good trait which lies behind the child's selfishness.

But better far than discovering an advanced case of selfishness in the child of

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six or seven or older, and then attempting a cure, is it to recognize in the infant the germ of such a character-disease, and so handle the child that no such acute problem will ever develop. I know a child, Julia, whose very observing mother recognized in her daughter while still an infant those aggressive tendencies which may develop into an egotism and a selfishness which would be obnoxious to others and a positive injury to the child throughout her life. Resolutely and farsightedly this mother set about her important task of prevention. She realized that there is no better and more natural method for beginning to curb and discipline a child's selfishness than through his physical habits. Julia was taught to receive her food regularly, and likewise she was taught to attend to, or have attended to, all her other physical requirements at regular intervals; in other words, Julia from the very beginning was trained to have her routine life fit naturally and pleasantly into the routine life of the family, and she never tasted the triumph of having the

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family life arbitrarily changed to suit her, or of having a selfish whim take precedence over the rights of the family. Julia's mother realized that every time the infant Julia cried, it did not mean that the child was in distress and required attention. She could easily distinguish between a genuine cry of distress and one of meaningless fretfulness, as all mothers can learn to do; and she knew that every time we answer a meaningless cry we encourage the child in forming the habit of crying; that every time we soothe such meaningless fretfulness by diversion, or walking about, we bit by bit encourage him to depend upon such diversion. In other words, we encourage and develop his selfishness.

As Julia grew older, the mother, instead of drilling Julia in the mere externals of pretty manners, strove to develop in the child the considerate impulses which are the basis of true good manners. For instance, to help keep down her selfish spirit, Julia from her earliest birthday never was given birthday presents. On her birthday

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she always gave presents away. Her mother considered that the person who has successfully passed another year should be the person to be grateful rather than be the recipient of gratitude. Until the age of three Julia gave to her friends and the people about her, who did things for her, toys and small objects which were particularly precious to her. Her mother took great care to connect in Julia's mind the gift with appreciation of service rendered. "This handkerchief," her mother would say, "is for Anna, who washes your shirts and stockings and rompers which keep you clean." From the time Julia began to be able to do things for herself she has made her own presents to give away — strings of beads, rough drawings, raffia napkin-rings and baskets. Julia found as much pleasure and anticipation in wrapping these gifts in tissue paper and tying them with white ribbons, as the recipients had in untying the packages and finding the surprises. These creations, though crude and simple, were always much appreciated by Julia's

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friends, because they realized the amount of thought and time and labor that went into them; and the giving of such simple presents incidentally led Julia to be satisfied with the simplest things for herself.

At the age of seven, Julia is today one of the most gracious, most considerate little girls I know, instead of being the offensively selfish little creature she probably would have been had not her mother handled her so wisely. And yet, she has not lost one particle of the seed of her menacing selfishness — her natural self-confidence and initiative, which will serve her so well in her maturity.

Now, as we have here, very briefly, studied selfishness, trying to know what it means and how best to handle it, so in a fuller way must we in our homes study the other qualities of our individual children. It can not be said too often, nor too emphatically, that to make the best of our children *we must know our children* — and know them sympathetically. We must get it into our minds, hard, that it is strictly up to us; that *our children are what we make them*.



## CHAPTER IV

### WHEN FAULTS ARE VIRTUES

THE faults of our children, if we are to believe the complaints of exasperated mothers, are numerous beyond belief. Our children are wilful; they are disobedient; they are stubborn; they are spiteful; they are selfish; they are nervous; they are irritable; they have frightful tempers — not inherited from us, of course; they are — But every weary mother of us can complete the list for herself. Making such a list is easy. What is hard to understand is why our children should have such faults. Certainly we try to check them. We punish our children, in spite of the pain it gives us, to bring them into a state of good behavior; and in endeavoring to better them we spare neither ourselves, our time, our strength, nor our money.

Then why, oh, why, this perversity?

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For my part — and I am so bold as to think myself right — I hold that, primarily, the explanation, and the cure as well, lies in our point of view. We have said, "These faults are faults, that's all there is to it", and upon that seemingly incontrovertible statement we have acted. But what we need is a new point of view. There are the faults, undeniably; but, we must ask ourselves what they mean and what powers may be behind them.

When we try to answer these questions by analyzing the faults of our children — and I am speaking here of the normal child of normal parents — we shall probably discover that, in the majority of cases, the faults are only an unpleasant and deplorable expression of forces that, in themselves, were originally admirable. They may spring from splendid energy that has not been permitted a proper activity, from fine emotions that are undisciplined and have not been given a happy outlet, from faculties that have not been given or allowed a wholesome occupation. When we take the point of view that ordinarily

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the faults of our children are, in reality, virtues perverted in some way, then we have accepted a fundamental and constructive working proposition, that is full of hope for us, as parents, and full of promise for the development of our children.

The most common and distressing fault among children, and the one that, as a rule, is least understood, is undoubtedly an uncontrolled temper. Parents have been driven to despair by that fault in their children; and the children themselves have inflicted immeasurable misery on others by it, have had their own usefulness and happiness crippled or curtailed, have perhaps even had their lives ruined by their inability to govern it.

We must realize that, detestable as temper ordinarily is, the qualities which are behind it are, in themselves, qualities to be admired and treasured, as they are forces capable of incalculable good. Temper may have its origin in, or be a perverted expression of, any of the following desirable qualities: self-dependence, will-power, high spirits, a desire for mental or physical activ-

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ity, curiosity, initiative, concentration and persistency, imagination, personality, emotional strength. The trouble is that either these splendid forces, these virtues, have somehow been distorted, or that we parents, in our well-meaning ignorance of the truth, have pursued exactly the wrong course to encourage their proper growth.

We must get the fact into our heads, and get it there to stay, that the child who can cry hard and long for the fulfilment of a desire, keeping all the time to the point of his desire, the child who can go through a violent fit of temper without bodily injury to himself, has physical energy, emotional strength, will-power, and the power of concentration. That same child can use his emotional strength just as well for expressing happiness as he can for expressing anger or disappointment; furthermore, that child can use his physical strength, and will, and persistence, in doing useful, constructive, helpful, positive things instead of using such magnificent forces in purely negative, unhappy, or destructive

## WHEN FAULTS ARE VIRTUES

ways. We must realize that it is the duty and opportunity of mothers, fathers, teachers, and all adults who are responsible for the first years of children's development to get hold of this precious raw material and make the greatest possible use of it. Our great problem is so to handle the child as to *prevent useful forces from going to waste* in temper.

To have physical health in the home, the home should be clean and free of germs. As regards temper, the same is true; the home should be morally aseptic and antiseptic, free of the germs which beget the disease of temper. In trying to prevent the development of temper, and to save the waste that goes with it, there are two chief working principles we should lay down for ourselves at the start. First, we must, from the child's earliest days, remove all possible causes of unnecessary irritation — and these are many in the average household. We must remember that temper, like practically every habit, good or bad, may take its start from an apparently insignificant event or practice,

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and that it becomes established through repetition. Second, we must see to it that, from the beginning of the child's life, those energies, which when misunderstood, or suppressed, or mishandled, result in temper, must have materials and opportunities for free, normal, happy, and constructive development.

Perhaps the chief cause of temper in a child's earliest years is the irregularity of physical habits; often combined with this is inconsistency of treatment by the parents. There is no better way to begin our effort to save the waste made by temper than by trying to establish regular habits. The child who has not been given food at regular hours, who has not been expected to sit properly at table and to eat his food correctly, will naturally be apt to fuss and misbehave at meal-time; and this will cause irritation to the parent, and an unfortunate struggle of wills between the parent and the child. Such an upheaval will not only be a waste of energy on the part of both the mother and child at the time the struggle takes place, but it invariably means that the

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child does not get the full benefit of the food he eats, and, further, that the consequent nervousness and irritation diminish his desire for food. Fits of temper at meals may, at the time, seem a very small matter indeed, but in the end they may be the cause, partly at least, of an impaired body and an uncontrolled will.

The mother who has been accustomed to put her child to bed at a certain hour every day, and who makes it a business to see that that hour is religiously kept, and takes the trouble not to allow any exciting events to happen just before it, will rarely have a struggle in getting the child to bed. I know a little girl of five who, while her mother was entertaining several friends at tea one afternoon, came in, and, to the surprise of one of the guests, said, "Mother, I came to say good night; it's time to go to bed," and kissed her mother and went out.

"How did you ever get Jane to do that?" asked the friend.

The mother explained that there had been no difficulty at all; Jane had been

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started that way, and had continued the habit. As a matter of fact, it is just as easy and convenient in the average home to have a definite time at which the child knows he is to go to bed as it is to have irregular hours. Our thoughtlessness in this respect affords one of the best illustrations of how we ourselves are often responsible for the bad tempers of our children.

"Johnnie, it is time to go to bed," I heard a mother say to her little boy.

"I don't want to," returned the little boy.

"Johnnie, you must go to bed!" commanded the mother.

"I want to ride on my cockhorse just once," whined Johnnie.

"You heard what I said, Johnnie!"

"But I want to!" Johnnie insisted.

"I say no!"

"But I want to!" exploded Johnnie, and stamped his foot.

"Just for one minute then, Johnnie—only one, remember!"



## WHEN FAULTS ARE VIRTUES

Johnnie pranced off for his cockhorse. The mother, in the meantime, became interested in something else, and fifteen minutes passed instead of the one the mother had agreed Johnnie was to have on his cockhorse. By that time Johnnie was playing marbles, and the mother again told him it was time to go to bed. Again a struggle ensued, again the mother yielded, again Johnnie began another game, and it was one full hour before he was finally carried off the scene, screaming, his little legs frantically kicking.

"He's very bad. I have the hardest time getting him to go to bed!" the worn mother exclaimed to me, with never a thought that her trouble was of her own making, and with never a dream of the handicap she was placing on her son.

Somehow, parenthood changes many of us into autocrats. We expect strict obedience from our children, but regard with too little seriousness the promises we make to them, with the result that vicious explosions of temper occur, as in a little scene

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I witnessed where the boy complained that his mother had promised him that he might go out and play ball with his friends.

"But I say that you can't," the mother arbitrarily repeated to him.

"But you promised me, mother," the boy insisted.

"Never mind what I promised you. I say 'no' now."

"But why, why, tell me why, mother?" the disappointed boy wildly demanded.

"You've heard what I said. That should be enough for you."

"I am going to play ball anyhow!" And, with these words, the now frantic boy took up his ball, and hurled it through the window-pane. I want to forget all that followed, except the little boy's sobbing plea for himself: "Mother, I couldn't help it! You promised me!"

If we would avoid temper, we must avoid the arbitrary repression of the child's natural instincts. Temper is frequently developed by our selfish way of thinking only of ourselves when handling our children. A

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nursemaid in the park, with a child between two and three years old, who was crying furiously, was desperately trying to appease him. She wheeled him up and down, she clapped her hands, she snapped her fingers at him, she rang a toy hung with bells, but nothing quieted the little fellow. When she noticed that I was watching her, she turned to me and said: "If his mother could see him crying she would go insane. This baby has never been allowed to cry since his birth. Every minute of his waking hours he is amused either by his mother or by me."

The nurse having absolutely failed in all her efforts to quiet the child, I ventured to suggest that she should leave him alone and see what he would do. She took my advice, and instantly the child stopped crying, threw off his cover, and said, "I want to walk." "But his mother told me," the nurse explained, "that he was not to be taken out of the carriage, that he gets too mussy and soiled, and that she expects company to see him this afternoon." And she resumed her previous attempts to quiet

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the baby. The nurse, of course, was faithful to her commands, and not being able to do anything for the struggling little boy she, in despair, wheeled him home, the child struggling and crying all the while.

Perhaps this is an exceptional example, but many mothers repress the natural desires of their children in less extreme manner, and the consequence is the same in nature, if not degree, namely, the generation of temper, with a resultant waste of power. This particular child's natural emotions and desires were continuously suppressed. On the other hand, he was continuously being artificially stimulated and diverted. He was living in a chaos of his own emotions. How could this child, or any child so unnaturally repressed, have at maturity any control of his emotions, of his desires, or even of his thoughts?

The merest trifle may bring on a fit of temper, or on the other hand, our way of handling that trifle may save the situation.

There should be a certain amount of elasticity in our methods of bringing up our

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children; we should know them well enough to be able to judge when, for the child's sake, we should give him a little leeway, and when, likewise for his sake, we should be firm with him. I dropped in to luncheon at a friend's house one day, and found the mother in a tussle with her little girl. The little girl had just come home from school and had refused to wash her hands before sitting down to the table. The mother insisted relentlessly that she was to do it *at once*. This treatment of the seven-year-old girl, already tired by her half-day's work in school, had the very opposite effect upon the child from what was expected. She would not yield. She absolutely refused to wash her hands, to go near the bathroom. With every command of the mother, who was growing more irritable every second, the little girl grew more stubborn and more determined not to give in. Finally the mother, to prove her power, forcibly led the little child to the bathroom and washed her hands. The little girl was so outraged that she could not eat at all.

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"But what was I to do?" the mother asked me later. "Of course I realized that I was cruel in the handling of Rose; but I will not, in the first place, have her disobey me, and, in the second place, she can not in all decency sit down at a meal without washing her hands."

Both of these ideas of the mother were good enough in themselves, but as important as the truth of an idea is the application of it at the right time and in the right manner. Certainly all the trouble and tragic waste of energy that went into this conflict between mother and daughter, begetting the spirit that would lead to further conflicts, could have been avoided if the mother had sympathetically and calmly suggested to Rose that as soon as she was either rested or ready to do it, she would of course wash her hands before she sat down at table. Sometimes the waiting of one minute, sometimes just a sympathetic suggestion, giving the child the choice between doing a thing now or a minute later, is enough to prevent an explosion.

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How to handle temper, and cure it, if possible, in a child of five or six where temper has become established, is, of course, one of the most difficult problems of this aspect of child training. We must recognize that punishment, in the ordinary sense of the word, has practically no curative effect. Spanking, whipping, locking in dark rooms, are but the home equivalent for the whipping-post and the prison black hole. A child may yield at the moment, through fear or pain; but most likely, there is engendered an evil, festering resentment, which will later burst out in an even more deplorable manner.

And yet, in extreme cases of violent temper among older children—and such cases are most likely to develop where the child's temper has been previously neglected or improperly cared for—severe measures must be taken. But the parent must always be in perfect command of her own temper; she must be kind, quiet, sympathetic. And the parent should always, as a fundamental principle, clearly show the child that the penalty inflicted

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is merely the direct result of the child's temper or other misdeed. *The child's nature must be studied*—this is where the parent must exercise judgment—and the penalty adapted to fit that nature.

Perhaps the penalty may be made to take the form of making the child understand—speaking always with firmness, gentleness, and an even spirit—that, unless he controls himself, he will bring upon himself the forfeiture of his dearest pleasure, or the loss of the plaything that he most loves.

Mary is a normally sweet child of great will-power, which will in the end be her greatest curse or her greatest blessing, the latter if she is properly handled. She is liable, however, to fits of temper of the most imperious and uncontrollable nature. She had never been whipped, for obviously she was of the kind upon whom whipping has its very worst effect; but various other methods had been tried in order to get her to restrain herself. These methods had proved practically useless; for the child had enough physical strength and force of



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will to pass untouched through all efforts to correct and control her.

Toward noon of Easter day, after a very happy morning, she went suddenly into one of her wildest tantrums. The mother tried a new tack. The little girl had received several Easter remembrances which she prized very much; and, of them all, she loved most a pretty, inexpensive egg-basket of cardboard, crêpe tissue-paper, and ribbons. The mother picked it up.

"Mary, if you don't stop," she said firmly, "I shall tear this beautiful basket to pieces. It will make me very, very sad to do so but if you do not stop, you will make me do it."

This the mother repeated over and over again, to drive home to the child the connection between her behavior and the destruction of the basket. She gave Mary plenty of time in which to change her attitude. But Mary believed her mother's words to be only a threat, and continued in her violence. Then the mother slowly tore the basket to bits.

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Instantly the child's rage turned to grief. It was a world tragedy, and she was the chief person bereaved. She wept and wept. The mother let her sob her grief out; then, still trying to drive home the connection, she lovingly asked whose fault it was that the basket had been destroyed.

"It — was — my — fault," choked the child, "and, oh, mother, I'll never be bad again!"

On Easter Monday, however, the child had another tantrum. The mother picked up a little, inexpensive rabbit of white plaster, the Easter present which Mary had valued next to the basket, and she patiently went through the same proceeding as on the day before. Again Mary did not stop; whereupon the mother threw the rabbit to the floor, where it was shattered into fragments. Again Mary's temper changed to grief; and, later, she again admitted that the loss of her beloved rabbit was her own fault.

Mary has not had a bad fit of temper since that day. The method used by her

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mother was objective, dramatic, spectacular, something that would instantly make a vivid and profound impression upon a child. Of course, Mary will have tantrums in the future. But she has learned that her parents love her and wish the very best for her; and she has realized, through this dramatic linking together of cause and result, that the only person who suffers in consequence of her temper is herself, and that, in so far as she is punished, she punishes herself. No effort has been made to break her will-power, nor to impair any of the other admirable forces which have expressed themselves in her temper.

"Why, I don't agree with what you say at all!" a friend exclaimed to me after I had been talking of the virtues that lay in, or behind, temper. "I think temper is simply awful, and I don't understand how, or why, people lose their tempers. Take myself; I have been righteously indignant, but I do not remember that I have ever had a fit of temper in my life."

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I was surprised, for she was as far removed as any woman I knew from the placid, emotionless women who move through life untroubled. In fact, she was exactly the sort of person who, if thoughtlessly handled as a child, would have been liable to violent and frequent gusts of temper. Later, I came to know my friend's father, a man with a thoughtful and purposeful personality, and I asked him about his daughter's training. He told me that, from her earliest years, he had recognized in her an intense power of the will and fervent emotions; and that he had taken the greatest precaution that these powers should not be wasted in tantrums. From the beginning he had given her opportunities to enable her energies to find an outlet in a happy, constructive way.

The mystery was a mystery no longer. My friend had a temper, or, rather, all the elements of a temper, but did not know it. All those elements, those energies, were unconsciously under perfect self-

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control. There was no wasted power; no infliction of misery upon others; no suffering, from this cause, of misery herself. Here prevention had been the parent's motto; and, consequently, no cure had been necessary.

*Our greatest interest in this problem of temper obviously should be how to handle the child so as to avoid the malgrowth of qualities, full of potential good, into destructive forces.* The first step in this endeavor should be, as I have indicated, to make a study of the child's characteristics. I know a little boy of five and a half, who without the guidance and thoughtful training that he is having, would most likely develop into an erratic, excitable, self-willed man who, unless everything went his way, would have, and would give, no peace. But his mother early realized that her child was possessed of powerful emotions and physical strength; and, from his infancy, she surrounded him with opportunities through which these powers could find expression. She was most careful and regular about his physical

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habits, his meals, his rest period, his sleep period; she made a point of seeing that before bedtime he was never excited, or overstimulated, or led into doing something which would necessarily delay the period of going to bed or make going to bed less pleasant than what he had just been doing. Thus, the child acquired the habit of doing the right thing at the right time, and was happy in so doing; and thus endless painful scenes were avoided, endless conflicts of will, which would have been certain germinators of temper.

She tried, to the best of her ability, to give the child's recognized emotional power a happy and developing activity. She gave him the opportunity for unselfish, joyous play. She gave him full chances to become acquainted with color and form, as he came in contact with them in his daily life; and so he loved flowers, and birds, and the beautiful things of nature. She saw that he was supplied with colored crayons, colored paper, scissors, and that he acquired the use of them. Without any fuss in dress or extra preparation, just

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in the regular, routine manner of going out for a walk, this mother would take the little boy to various places of interest, to the museum, the aquarium, or just merely to some new park. Thus, this child had pleasant occupation for his vitality. His instinct for physical activity, his emotions, his imagination, were so satisfied, and constructively satisfied, that there was no cause, and no time, for temper to be fostered in him. In consequence, this little boy now goes for weeks without having a tantrum, though he possesses in a marked degree the qualities out of which wild temper is developed. Those qualities are being utilized as qualities, not as the begetters of vices, and are assets in the development of his character.

An almost ideal illustration of temper, what it is, what it may mean, and what it may become, is afforded by the life of the deaf and dumb Helen Keller. As a child she had a temper so violent that, at times, it rendered her uncontrollably vicious; her autobiography tells us that. But, happily, the teacher who came to her, Miss O'Sulli-

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van, now Mrs. Macy, was gifted with patience, and she at length perceived that the awful outbursts of the child were merely perverted, unbridled expressions of driving energy. That energy was wisely handled, was set to work; the result is one of the sweetest, most inspiring, most accomplished women of our age. Yet, despite her native intellectual gifts, Helen Keller would never have become the woman she is had it not been for the energy and will-power which, when first seen, appeared to the eye as stubbornness, and malignant, ungovernable fury.



## CHAPTER V

### THE SECRET DOORS OF CHILDHOOD

FROM the mass of problems and questions which have been presented to me in the course of my professional work in private cases, and which have been presented to me in letters in response to my magazine writing, two great general facts stand boldly out. I think that a brief statement of these two fundamental facts, common to all the cases submitted, and perhaps common to almost all families where the children are a problem, will be of interest to every parent who reads this book.

The first of these two facts relates particularly to the child. This fact is that the problems — many have been deep and serious, obviously causing much suffering to both parents and children — have indicated no inherited abnormalities in the children

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concerned. Indeed, many of these children, whose faults and shortcomings have caused so much concern in the home, are plainly children of unusual promise, of definite power and ability. Innumerable bad habits, undesirable traits, regrettable inclinations, have been presented, but not one that could not have been checked, corrected, or directed into happier channels, if only the forces and qualities behind these distressing habits had been recognized and intelligently handled before these qualities had time to develop into the deplorable forms which made the children *problems*.

The second of these two facts relates to the parents. There has been little evidence of any thoughtful effort made to observe, analyze, and thus try to understand, the nature of the individual child before trying to influence or direct his development. It has been plain in many instances, especially where the difficulty was aggravated, that not until the parents began to pay in personal discomfort, humiliation, and unhappi-

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ness for their children's defects, did they realize that problems existed, and that these problems were serious and required serious attention. But despite this failure to perceive early opportunities and to make the most of them, there has been in almost every case evidence of abundant parental devotion and of earnest desire to do the best for the children.

And so, after considering this great diversity of problems submitted by mothers from all parts of the country, I feel that I must state that my attitude is constantly growing more hopeful. There are faults in the children — yes; and sad ones. And there are shortcomings and lack of knowledge on the parents' part — and that is deplorable. But I now realize with a certainty which daily grows greater that these faults are curable, or better still, preventable. And I now know more certainly than before that an increasing number of mothers are seeking with poignant earnestness an understanding of their children and are striving for their children's fullest development.

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I have selected for discussion in this chapter a group of problems submitted by mothers which have their main origin in one of the least recognized, least understood, most elusive, yet most common characteristics of childhood—sensitiveness. We who have given no thought to this quality can not imagine the suffering that the child endures because of it, and the waste of life forces, the extent to which he may be twisted or dwarfed or broken, by its non-appreciation.

Sensitiveness, according to the child's nature and the way he has been handled, may have a multitude of painful and pain-giving expressions, ranging from a shrinking silence that seeks to mask its hurt, through sullenness, through a forbidding pride, to wild, ungovernable rage. One mother has told me of her son who, long ago, through a mere slip, told her "a very little lie of the whitest kind." She did not at the time guess that a lie had been told her, and the super-sensitive, conscience-accused child did not dare reveal his own terrible wick-

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edness by confessing. So keenly did this child feel his iniquity that he attributed the death of his baby brother, who died two days after the incident of the lie, to his sin, and for years suffered a flaming torture as his brother's murderer. Not till years later did the mother learn what had been passing within the secret places of her boy's soul. "How am I," asked this mother, "to find a way to the deepest life of my son, where I shall know him, and be able to help him?"

Another has told of a boy of six who plays all sorts of games in the liveliest and most exquisite fashion with a playmate who exists only in his imagination, but who goes into the wildest tantrums when he is crossed, and who is very exacting and very capricious. Another mother has told of a girl whom she described as a child who is sullen, unsocial, with lack of initiative, and "who goes about in constant terror of grown-up people." Another has told of a child of eight who is essentially generous and lovable, but strong-willed, who is

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easily offended by her playmates who, in consequence, prefer not to play with her if they can help it — with the result that the girl sufferingly spends much of her time in embittering loneliness. And another has told of a child who is inordinately shy, timid, draws away from people. What is the matter, these mothers have asked, and what can we do about it?

The matter with these children, and many others whose cases have been submitted, and with tens of thousands of children who are worries to their parents, is that they have a highly sensitive nature which has never been understood and which has never had the delicately sympathetic treatment that it requires. There is no quality in childhood for whose neglect the penalty is greater and the suffering more acute, especially to the child, than *sensitiveness*. Just as some plants are more sensitive to soil and atmospheric conditions than others, just so, only in an infinitely greater degree, are the natures of some children far more sensitive, more impressi-

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ble, more delicately adjusted, more easily affected by influences, than other children's. And just as the sensitive plant, in order to survive in all its beauty, needs more thought and more delicate care than the hardy plant, just so must the sensitive child be more carefully studied and more sympathetically handled than the child whose nervous organism is not so delicately poised.

Usually the sensitive child possesses to a marked degree the raw materials of the finer qualities and instincts of human nature. He will often have a keener imagination, greater emotional strength, and more of the creative power than the less sensitive child — but the development of these qualities into useful, positive forces depends entirely on the way they are handled. These splendid promises in the child, which with thoughtful and careful training can be made of the greatest service and greatest happiness to him and society, can on the other hand with thoughtless, arbitrary training be made of the greatest hindrance and suffering to both.

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The little boy who suffered silent agonies for years because of a "very little white lie" opens up the important problem of "truth" and the sensitive child. I am not informed as to the exact influence which caused this boy's silence; but it is within reason to imagine that the mother — since so many mothers have done a similar thing — in her great desire to emphasize the importance of truthfulness to her little boy, painted the lie so uncompromisingly black and terrifyingly huge that to his highly imaginative and sensitive nature the lie became the most awful of moral monsters. With the result that, when a lie slipped his lips, he felt he had been guilty of an act so hideous that he simply could not speak of it.

This child suffered, and lost much out of his life, through having been given an exaggerated idea of truth; other sensitive children suffer, and have their good qualities twisted and impaired, through not having been given a proper regard for truth, and not having been treated with truthfulness. I dare say all of us can think of cases



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where evil has resulted to a sensitive child from having been treated with half-truths, subterfuges, evasions. *Frankness, sincerity, honesty* — these are fundamentals in the handling of all children, and particularly must they be so regarded with the sensitive child. We must be excessively careful to present facts in their normal outlines and relations, and not to understate or exaggerate, for fear of the distorted conceptions that may be begotten by a quick imagination. And for another reason must we strive to be sincere: the sensitive child may be unusually keen of perception, and, penetrating the insincerity, may be made contemptuous or suspicious of the parent, or may himself be stimulated to insincere acts.

Before we approach the task of teaching truth to the sensitive child, we must realize that truth is not always hard-and-fast, of just one shape; we must recognize that there is a legitimate difference between a statement of facts as they coldly and scientifically exist, and a statement of those same facts as they appear through the

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organs of perception of an imaginative individual. Particularly must we remember that the child lives in a world of his own, not in our world. His train, built of three chairs; his boat, transformed out of his bed; and his horse, made of his father's leg, are for the moment as real to him, as the little child himself is real to us. No thinking person would call lies these things which are truths to the child's imagination, nor would any thinking person say that the child acts, sees, or tells lies when he attributes to his creations names which stand for entirely different ideas to us. When we once understand what a powerful and facile factor the child's imagination is in the first years of his life, how by the mere wave of his tiny finger any tangible object changes instantly within his imagination into the forms of his desire, we can begin to appreciate the risk we take in presenting truth to the child in the abstract, as a mere word-formula.

I know a very sensitive, imaginative little girl of six who can turn the most ordinary objects into fairies, flowers, birds, and

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stars, and who for hours at a time can live through the gamut of emotions with these creations of her imagination, yet who has the keenest perception of practical truthfulness. In a matter-of-fact way this little girl will say, as if fearing that she would get the entire credit for a performance, "Mother, you will remember that in this reed mat Miss So-and-So helped me to do that little piece. I did not do it all myself." Or when she loses, breaks, or misplaces anything she frankly and quickly will claim the whole or part of the blame for herself, according to the facts in the situation. And not only is she careful in her own statements but she expects the same from her associates.

In the training of this little girl the method followed was that of simple frank directness in all dealings with her from her earliest years. This is the most natural and easy way to inculcate truthfulness in the child—to live truth in all the intimate daily relationships with him. It is quite possible to teach the truth without even

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once talking about it. Never was advantage taken of this little girl's immature mind; never was deception or pretense resorted to, even when the truth caused difficulties and pain. If there was something she could not have or could not do, or some pleasure that had to be denied her, the situation was met and settled openly, without any compromises. If the child was guilty of gross misconduct, the mother would explain calmly, simply, and seriously what was wrong and what was expected of the child, and would assume that the misdeed would not be repeated. There was never any threat of punishment "if you do that naughty thing again." On the other hand, there was never any promise of reward "if you promise to be good." There was never any glossing over of mistakes or misdeeds that deserved serious attention, correction, or even reprimand; but the greatest care was taken never to make a mountain of a mole-hill. Inasmuch as from the very first perfect openness had been the basis of the child's relationships,

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I hardly think it would have occurred to this little girl to lie. And even if she had told a lie, there would have been no terrific force, as there was in the case of the little boy, holding it in her to sear her with its shameful agony. She would have spoken of it, and I think spoken of her own accord; she would have taken the consequences, and would have felt herself whole and clean again.

The child who was described as playing exquisitely with an imaginary playmate, but who went into a rage when crossed, brings out a most important fact which we adults have neglected to carry forward with us from our own childhood. We have forgotten it, most of us, yet we should never forget, never lose sight of the fact that the child-world is just as real, just as sacred, just as important to the child as our grown-up world is to us. Often, merely because we are physically stronger, we demolish his world without giving a thought to what a tragedy that destruction means to the little child.

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The first point to remember about the child of this type is that the more imaginative and more emotional he is, the greater will be his reaction against any unwarranted opposition or interference. In the treatment of such a child we must in the first place give just consideration to him and to his powers, we must not suppress them arbitrarily; but at the same time we must also be very careful not to allow his imagination and his emotions to take possession of the entire household. The greatest care must be taken not to indulge him, just as the greatest care must be taken not to suppress him. The best way to cure rage in a child is to be most careful, in the first place, not to give it a pretext to become aroused; and that can be done only through a sympathetic and just relationship.

A certain little girl in my circle of child friends has a high degree of intelligence, imagination, and emotional strength, and takes the keenest delight in expressing herself. For a period of several days rain fell

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continuously. It was dreary and wet and gray, and the effect upon the little girl was most depressing. Finally, on one of these dreary days the little girl exclaimed: "Oh, I am so, so tired of this rain! Won't we ever have sunshine?" And as if an inspiration had come to her she ran to her room, seized her crayons and paper, and quickly produced a yellow sun with streaming rays, and pinned it on the wall. As if by the magic of her make-believe sun the previously depressed spirit of the little girl quickened to the spirit of the dance, and she skipped lightly about the floor, extemporizing steps and figures, joyous in her imaginary sunlight.

In the midst of this beautiful transformation a brother of nine, who was most undisciplined and careless, entered the room, and seeing this bit of paper on the wall he went over to it without thought or question, and pulled it down, crushed it, and threw it on the floor. At this unexpected destruction all the little girl's imaginative and emotional strength, which had just

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been finding exercise in joyous creation, were in an instant turned into hate and fury—for exactly these beautiful qualities are the basis of rage of the most violent kind. She turned upon her brother in grief and insane wrath; her onslaught was ferocious beyond words.

“It wasn’t anything but a piece of paper,” the boy explained to his mother, who had been drawn to the room by the uproar. Had that mother not been a woman of understanding this super-sensitive little girl might have been made, through a number of such experiences, into a wild-tempered and even vicious child, as are so many misunderstood children with similar temperaments. The mother got rid of the boy—he was a different problem, to be dealt with in a different way—and took the girl in her arms, and assured her with sympathy and with utter frankness how sorry she felt, and what an unkind thing it was that her brother had done. This sympathy and this tenderness acted like oil on that little child’s passions, and within a



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very little while she calmed down. And when a little later her brother came in — after having had a scene with his mother in another room — and apologized, and smoothed out the crumpled sun, and pinned it back on the wall, she quickly forgave him.

The sullen, unsocial child, the child described by its mother as “in constant terror of grown-up people,” is very likely to be the very opposite of what the shell of his behavior proclaims him to be. He may love people and have the keenest desire to be with and near them, and yet be unable to break the wall of shyness or reserve that closes him off from easy social intercourse.

I know one little boy of six whose development I have watched since infancy. As a little child he was inordinately shy with all persons not members of his family. He drew inside himself at the touch or look of an outsider, and literally closed and locked the door of his personality. As a baby he would never make any sign of recognition when people spoke to him; would not wave

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good-by or respond to any greeting, however affectionate. Friends and relatives of the family used to think the little child very queer, and thought the mother even more queer because she did not urge and require the boy to respond to them, and thus to act according to their ideas of how children should be taught good manners. Yet this little boy had all the qualities for social intercourse. With his mother he was affectionate, spirited, and even demonstrative, but with outsiders it seemed as if his social-expressive organs were paralyzed. It was in his case as much a physical inhibition as if one had the desire to walk and found himself unable to move his legs.

This little boy's father, a gifted man, but one of the quietest and most reserved people I know, had come of reserved parents and had had the severest sort of discipline and repression in his childhood. He was brought up in accordance with the cast-iron rule, "Children should be seen but not heard." The result was that his emotions were never allowed to find ex-

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pression, and he had developed into a being who, though he felt deeply, was emotionally almost dumb. There was no doubt that the small son John was the victim of his father's heritage.

The method followed to find the hidden doors to little John, and then gently to open them, — the method which helped him to overcome his paralyzing shyness and sensitiveness, and which has made him today, at the age of six, a normal, social child, loved and sought by his small as well as big friends, though still a trifle slower than the average in making advances, — this method will, I believe, be suggestive of how to handle the manifold ills and problems that spring from shyness. The chief thing to be remembered in such a case is never to force the child into doing what is to us a pleasant and easy social act, and never to emphasize the fact that he is not doing it. Every time we bring pressure upon him, his natural reaction will be to withdraw even farther into himself; every time we call attention to his failure to come forward we

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make him more self-conscious, therefore more sensitive and less willing to make the effort. If we once realize that a child of this type must learn to express his emotions, just as the ordinary little child learns to walk, that in his case it is a slower and more difficult process to get control of the emotional medium than it is to get muscular control, we will once and for all time abandon that tactic of forcing and nagging a sensitive child into action, which can result only in discouragement and failure.

In John's case, the mother — most important of all steps! — early recognized the nature of her child. She saw the evil that might come from that nature, and she saw also the great good. From the start she set about to avoid the danger and develop the promise. While the greatest care was taken not to make him more self-conscious, by calling attention to his shyness, by forcing persons upon him, yet a particular effort was made by his mother and those closest to him to be warmly expressive to him in greetings and acknowledgments.

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He was stimulated to play and mix with other children, but care was taken at the first to make the child forget the personal element in this contact. The interest, was always centered outside of him, in the game, or in the working-material. A common interest brings children as well as adults closer together and the personnels are forgotten.

As soon as it was realized that John was having real pleasure out of his association with other children, that it was becoming easier for him to work and play with them, his mother gradually began to encourage him to express his satisfaction. But instead of ordering or asking him to do it, she would at the end of the game very noticeably thank the children for playing with John, wish them good-by, shake hands all around, and merely suggest to John, casually, without pressure, that he do the same. At first in response John would bury his head in his mother's skirts and ask to go home. This the mother apparently would not notice, never reprimanding him

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or making a scene, as is so often and so cruelly done, in the presence of friends — a course which is particularly offending to a sensitive child. Oftentimes it was plain that John had the keenest desire to stretch out his little hand and say good-by, but he could not get himself to do it.

This suggestion the mother would follow up at home during her play-period with him. "Let us play visiting," she would say. Instantly John would become the host and the mother the guest. In the most serious fashion the mother would knock at the door, walk in, greet John, shake hands with him, talk to him about different things in a grown-up way. Then she would change into another visitor and he into another host, and so it would go on, each representing different people. This playing was done in so spirited a fashion that John could hardly have enough of the game. It was made dramatic and attractive and impersonal. After such a game the mother would suggest: "Won't it be fun to do it with real friends? Tomorrow when we

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play with the other children we will play that game with them in a real way." Such simple suggestions were repeated often; and as the child grew older and was better able to understand, the mother would explain very simply to him that it is only kindness to answer and greet people who love you and are interested in you. And so, by degrees, John began, at first very, very slowly, to respond — with the result, as I have said, that the doors of his being are now open, and he comes out freely, and naturally, and wholesomely to meet the world.

It is indeed a slow, a very slow, process to cultivate and set free the social spirit in so sensitive and naturally repressed a child as I have indicated. But unless we are prepared to follow such a cautious, sympathetic, unfolding process, we are taking terrific chances of making the child close rigidly and defiantly and sullenly up; or perhaps of so distorting and injuring the soul of the little child that what was originally a fine and promising quality may

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become hardened, ugly, embittered, and violent, and may express itself in vicious practices or uncontrollable outbursts. To turn to the worst examples — a great percentage of our criminals today are men and women who were made into perverts largely through the neglect and the thoughtless suppression and repression of a naturally sensitive nature.



## CHAPTER VI

### "MY CHILD IS DISOBEDIENT —"

"How shall I teach my child to obey me?"  
"How shall I punish my child?" These twin and seemingly inseparable questions summarize the problems presented me by scores of earnest parents; and it is fair to infer that these are the questions that hundreds of thousands of other parents are asking themselves in irritation, perplexity, and despair. "Obedience," together with the proper method of enforcing it, which long usage has prescribed to be "punishment" — these two constitute a universal problem which poignantly revives itself with every new mother.

"My child is disobedient!" Thus have begun hundreds of requests for help made to me by letter or in person. This disobedience seemingly takes as many different forms as there are different children.

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"My little child is defiant to desperation," writes one mother—I quote from typical letters; "how am I to teach her obedience?" And another parent writes: "Please tell me how to control my little son's most objectionable trait, *contrariness*. He has tremendous energy, is highly excitable, keenly alert mentally, has terrific will-power, and is persistent to the point of exhaustion. He can not be punished in the ordinary ways without terrible results, without making him *ugly*." "My little girl of three," writes another mother, "who is normal in every way physically is usually manageable at home, where she is very active, liking to sweep, dust, sew, and put her things in order. But she is most unmanageable outside the house. Spanking and putting her in a corner have no effect on her." And still another mother writes of a boy of four, who is active, spirited, and keen, but who will never take her requests or commands seriously. Thus the cases run on.

Before proceeding with these problems, let us try to make clear to ourselves just what

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that thing really is which we call by the vague and sweeping term “disobedience”; let us try to search out what is behind and beneath the behavior which irritates and bewilders us, and renders us desperate. And while we are searching let us also search ourselves with utmost candor for our motive in desiring that our child be obedient. Is it primarily for our own relief?—or is it primarily for the child’s betterment?

Let us try to realize, just here, that deplored disobedience and its opposite, obedience, are of secondary importance, save in so far as they are symptoms. The thing which is of prime importance is the child’s condition, of which obedience or disobedience may be merely symptomatic. Looking behind and beneath the comparatively superficial thing we call disobedience, we must try to find the fundamental thing that is wrong in our children; or the fundamental thing that, perhaps, is wrong in ourselves.

Disobedience, diagnosed to its first cause, means primarily that the child’s will is disordered—that the will is too strongly de-

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veloped in aspects that promise danger for the future, or that it has been under-developed, or that it has been perverted. And, as association and environment are usually important contributing factors in disease, disobedience means that something is probably wrong with the parents.

For obedience, in the sense that obedience is something demanded by and given to unquestioning authority, I have little regard. But in discipline I do believe — and I am led to speak of discipline here for the reason that in previous chapters I have emphasized the need of giving the child “freedom.” There is nothing contradictory between the two. The ideal freedom behind the best methods of child-training means freedom from unnecessary suppression, from thoughtless, unreasonable, unjust, unsympathetic guidance; it means freedom from blind, arbitrary direction; it means freedom to grow, to develop naturally and normally, under constant, consistent, and thoughtful direction — a “freedom” which implies the severest, strictest

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*kind of discipline.* Indeed, discipline is the very foundation of any wise and sane educational method. But we must remember that discipline is a most powerful instrument, and like all powerful instruments it must be used with great care, with great wisdom. Before we undertake the momentous task of constructive discipline we must, with care and tenderness and sympathy, try to discover what are the traits to be overcome, and what are the good qualities to be developed.

The little boy whom one mother describes as having tremendous energy, being persistent to exhaustion, whose insufferable trait is contrariness, is distinctly of the class where “will” is the paramount problem. This boy requires firm but sympathetic handling, he needs discipline (not punishment, remember), applied wisely to his body, his mind, and his soul. But in disciplining the child’s powers the greatest care must be taken not to break them, and not to lose the child’s respect and affection.

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The handling of such a child is indeed a problem, though far, far less serious a problem than that of the child who is anæmic, colorless, who is easily led, and who obeys without question. From the very outset the parents must recognize that the former child is one of unusual promise. But they must also realize that a child who has physical strength, whose intellect is keen, whose emotions are powerful, will, so long as these forces are untrained, express himself violently; especially will he react violently under opposition. But wild and distressing exhibitions must not frighten the mother into thinking that here is a nervous, high-strung, keyed-up temperament, and therefore frighten her into quickly yielding in the fear that, as one mother expressed it, "the emotions are too powerful for the child's frame." What such exhibitions really mean is that the child plainly has no control over his forces, that they get the better of him.

An experience I had with a five-year-old boy will be suggestive in a general way of

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how to handle a child of this type. This little boy asked a friend and myself to play croquet with him. Before we started the game I gave the little boy the privilege of choosing whatever color mallet he wanted, and he chose the red. The game started, and matters went well for a couple of turns, when all of a sudden the small boy demanded my mallet. Thinking that the handle of his mallet was loose, I suggested that he take the one left in the box. “No!” He wanted *my* mallet, nothing else would do. I examined his, and found it in perfect condition; there was no reason for his having my mallet. I realized at once that here was simply an effort on the child’s part to assert his will, and so I calmly and graciously refused his demand. The little boy, however, was persistent; he begged and cried, but I was equally persistent in my refusal, and with my friend continued the game undisturbed, ignoring the boy except when his turn came, to which he no longer gave any attention. I also asked my friend not to notice the child,

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to betray by neither look nor action any signs of sympathy for him. The boy wept louder, shouting out his demand all the time, and when by this method he did not get my attention he lay down on the ground and kicked his legs in the air. Failing by these tactics to draw us to him, he came to me, and began to tug furiously at my skirt, getting hold of my mallet, and trying to wrench it from my hands. But as gently as I could I released my mallet from his grasp, and proceeded with my play. Then he got in front of my ball, and before the wicket; in which cases I removed him bodily, placing him gently out of the way, and went on with my play. Under such painfully trying conditions my friend and I resolutely finished the game, after which we very deliberately put our mallets and balls in the box and went away.

This child had developed an exaggerated case of wilfulness. The whole point of my treatment was to prove to the little boy in a concrete way that his wilfulness did not apparently interfere with my happiness, but



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that it did interfere with his, that he was the sufferer. I realized that behind this trifling incident was a will that, unless disciplined at once, would mean the ruin of the ~~man~~ in him.

The next day, when my friend and I were again on the croquet-ground, at an opportune moment I asked the boy if he wished to play with us. He did. Each of us picked up the mallet and ball of our choice and the game was played in complete peace and happiness. Though no reference was made to the sad experience of the day before, I knew perfectly well that that child remembered his lesson.

As I have said, we must look also into ourselves for the cause of disobedience in our children. There is nothing more common than wilfulness arising from the incredibly inconsistent and indulgent treatment of children, particularly when company is present or is expected. Mothers bribe their children, make all sorts of thoughtless offers, if only the child “promises to be good” in the presence of guests. Through such conduct

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the child naturally learns that he can take advantage of the mother, and having such knowledge he acts upon it.

The case of the little girl cited by me before, who is obedient at home, where she is kept happily occupied, but who is unmanageable when she goes on a visit or for a walk with her mother — this may be an instance where the public wilfulness of the child is primarily the mother's fault, though I do not say definitely that this mother is to blame. From the description of this little girl, who is happy at home when active, but who misbehaves so in public, she is obviously a child with a good mind, with an active imagination, and with abundant energy. Unless opportunities for the legitimate exercise of these insuppressible qualities are provided, they will very naturally burst out in stubbornness, defiance, and little acts of outlawry. A child alone with adults, and away from its own playthings and working-materials, quickly becomes bored unless the parent is a true companion to the child in mind and spirit. All too commonly the

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parent, when away from home, is preoccupied with her own ideas, or is engaged in a conversation which is unintelligible to the little child, and the child's questions and interests are overlooked. Then the child explodes, or makes a break for something that does promise to occupy its energies. Mere commands to a restless child, under such circumstances, are worse than useless; they are likely to provoke the child to more violent disobedience, which in turn begets a rising exasperation in the parent — and the scene grows worse and worse!

The best way to handle such explosions of defiant will is to see that they never happen. To prevent them the child's walk or visit should be made truly interesting, by conversation, by exercise, by games. Unless it is unavoidable, a child should not be taken to places which in their nature are overstimulating, or which hold no actual interest or appeal for him. If, however, despite the utmost thoughtfulness on the parent's part, the child is obstinate or defiant, and — for instance — will not go home

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when the time to do so arrives, or will not turn in the right direction, it is, if possible, a great deal wiser to avoid a scene in public, or any sort of a battle of wills. That can be done by taking the child by the hand calmly and quietly, and interesting him in some new idea or new object or new occupation.

Such diversions, however, should be resorted to only in emergencies. If practised often, they degenerate the child's will-power. The child should be helped to meet such situations openly. For instance, if the child's "disobedience" takes the common form of refusing to go home, then the next time, before you go out to a place to which the child is particularly attracted, say to him that he must understand that when you say it is time to go he is to obey, and that unless he agrees to this condition he can not go at all. And, of course, if he fails to live up to this agreement you must firmly live up to your share of it, and make him sacrifice the next pleasant visit he expected to make to that place, and make him understand that he brought this loss

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upon himself. But in any such procedure as this, you must first be certain that your course is just, and from the beginning you must make sure that the child realizes this.

We can hardly conceive of the extent to which disobedience is fostered, and the will-power perverted, by our misunderstanding of our child's nature, or by our failure sympathetically to appreciate the values the child attaches to this act or that desire. Perhaps in our endeavor strictly to carry out an established rule, or to be what we consider eminently just, we leave out of account the imagination or emotions of the child. A little girl of six, of very strong will, who was just learning to write, conceived the tremendous idea of writing a letter to her father, who was coming home late that evening — which letter she was going to place beneath his pillow, to be discovered and read by him when he went to bed. The mother, not appreciating what this meant to the child, put the child off until it suited her convenience. Her convenience did not arrive until half-past six; the child's estab-

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lished hour for being in bed was seven. The little girl dictated to her mother what she wanted to say, and the mother mechanically set down the child's message. But this was not enough for the child; she was thrilled with the idea of making the letter the biggest possible surprise, she wanted it to be in *her own hand*. So with slow, painstaking fingers she began to copy the letter. Her hand grew tired, she grew sleepy, but with unfaltering will she kept on — for before her was the dream of the pleased surprise of her father as he lifted his pillow. Seven o'clock drew near; her mother commanded her to stop; she begged for time, and was given until the stroke of the hour. Seven struck with the letter still unfinished. The mother ordered the child to bed, the child pleaded for time to complete her letter. This the mother flatly refused, and in turn the child flatly refused to obey. Then came the explosion, the clash. The mother forcibly picked the child up and carried her off, the girl resisting and fighting her mother in a tearful passion of wildest violence. By superior strength the

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child was put to bed. Obedience had been enforced, but the little girl lay sobbing in the dark, wild with grief over the tragedy of her broken dream, and her will furiously vibrant with resentment against her mother — her spirit newly sown with the seed of disobedience!

This violent encounter, this disobedience, and the future disobedience which was here engendered, could all have been avoided if the mother had only understood her child's nature, and had given the proper consideration to her child's will. She should have realized the great thing the letter meant to the girl, and should have let her start it in time to finish it, and thus have sent the child to bed happy, and with that healthy growth of the will which comes from completing an important self-appointed task.

*Right here let us remember that good rules are excellent when we master them, but are dangerous when they master us.*

We must always bear in mind that our requests to our children must be reasonable

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ones. If we would have our children obey us, we must deserve their obedience. Disobedience is very often brought on, and the will disordered, through our lack of being simple and straightforward in our dealings with our children. We must state our rules and requests so clearly and with such sincerity that there will be no doubt in the child's mind as to our attitude and meaning, and so that he will be able to tell when we are serious, and when we are merely playing. The little boy whose mother states that he defiantly says, "No" to all her demands — this mother, by the way, admits in her letter that she "fooled" with her child too much — is a victim of just such a bewildering relation.

"Why, Felix, what do you mean by pulling out all the beautiful flowers by their roots?" I heard a mother reprimand her little boy, who came to her with an armful of cosmos still in the bud. "I worked so hard on those flowers!"

"But, mother," the little boy explained, "I didn't pull *all*. There are a few left."



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The reply of this four-year-old boy, plus the picturesque figure he made in his overalls with that bunch of greens in his hands, made the mother forget almost instantly the seriousness of the deed. “Oh, you are such a funny farmer!” she exclaimed with a laugh. “Now, run away and don’t be a naughty boy again!”

The boy went back to the cosmos-bed, and literally pulled up every one of the flowers and returned with these to his mother. There followed a terrific scene, although for this second inroad upon the flowers the boy was hardly to be blamed.

Disobedience often arises from a lack of a feeling of responsibility by the child toward other people. I know a little girl of nine who is very much like the boy whose mother writes that he pays no attention to any request made of him. This little girl had a fall in infancy, and suffered from it during the first four years of her existence. During that period, in order to save her strength and build her up physically, everything was done for her; nothing was expected

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of her, and even when she grew stronger and had a keen desire to do things for herself, the mother or attendant was instantly on the spot with, "Don't, Elizabeth; this is too much for you — let me do it." Nobody was allowed to cross her in any way for fear of annoying her. The result of this treatment was that this little child gained robust physical strength, but had no real sense of social obligations or any feeling of responsibility. From the time she was four until she was nine, though in splendid health, she was a little despot for whom tasks and household law and the convenience of other persons did not exist.

The mother, who came to me for assistance, was in despair about Elizabeth, whom she called inattentive, wayward, wilful, and disobedient. The little girl, it developed, was naturally not at all ungenerous or unkind; she was just what the indulgent handling of her early years had made her. What she needed was to learn her social responsibilities, through life and by actual practice. A program was planned for

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her routine life in which her comforts and pleasures depended on herself, in which there were assigned her definite tasks, the failure to perform which resulted automatically in some loss or unpleasantness to herself. The program was not planned with any notion of punishing the child, but with the idea that strict but just discipline would help cultivate and establish in her habits of concentration, attention, and consideration for others, in all of which she was entirely lacking. The task of reshaping a malformed will is by no means an easy one, and the experiment with Elizabeth is still in progress; but the results of this new method of handling the child are sufficiently promising to encourage the mother to continue with this plan, and to believe that Elizabeth is being made into a well-balanced girl.

Inevitably in our consciousness habit has linked with the word “obedience” the word “punishment.” One hopeful thing that has been revealed by my relations with mothers is that parents are recognizing that

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corporal punishment, whether expressed in the form of physical pain actually inflicted, or as an autocratic command which must be obeyed because of the menacing superior force behind it, is failing in its avowed purpose. They are recognizing that "unquestioning obedience", with behind it the penalty of bodily pain, in almost all cases accomplishes, at the best, only a temporary result; and that the ultimate and permanent effect is to beget deceit, and engender servility and hatred and viciousness of spirit; that the ultimate effect is to *break* or *pervert*, and not to *build* character. One mother, who has a tragic story, writes in her anguish that, "my husband and not my son should have gone to prison." She describes her now-adult son to have been a child who was mentally alert, spirited, surcharged with physical energy — all excellent qualities. "But his father was always at him," writes the mother. The boy's slightest offense — his noisy playing, his unexpected laugh, his lateness to a meal, his refusal of a request — was always met by the father with

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punishment and severest rebuke. The result was that the spirited boy, provoked to rebellion, allied himself with a gang of boys of the wildest type — and today is paying the penalty of his father-engendered recklessness by a long sentence behind the bars.

"But do you believe in physical punishment in any case?" people ask me. "If not, what do you suggest as a substitute?"

One fundamental objection that I have to physical punishment is that it does not really "punish" — for the true object of punishment is not to inflict revenge, but to awaken the child to a sense of his fault, and to arouse in him the desire and determination to do better. Corporal punishment rarely does this. One sometimes hears adults speak of childhood whippings which did them good. Perhaps such people are right, to some extent; but it is likely that they would have been more improved if some other method of discipline had been used.

As a substitute for corporal punishment, which begets only physical pain, and with

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it, usually, a corroding desire for revenge, I would suggest punishment which is aimed at the child's mind, imagination, emotions, desires. Punishment, to be effective and constructive, and to help develop the child's will, must be something which the child recognizes could have been avoided by the exercise of his will.

Of course any such punishment will have to be varied according to the nature of the child; and that is one reason why the parent must carefully study the child before undertaking any action. Perhaps one instance will make clear what I mean by punishment of this kind. A little girl of six, whose unbridled wilfulness I was trying to correct, had a supreme desire for a ring. An inexpensive ring was given to her, with what she knew was very great love; and it was given to her not as a bribe or a reward, but was expressly given her as a reminder that she should control her will. Further, it was given with her understanding and consent that if she failed to control herself the ring would be forfeited. On the first offense she

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was to give up the ring for three days; on the second offense, for a week; and on the third she was to lose it altogether. The girl realized that the mother's effort was not to get her to forfeit the ring, but to help her to keep it; and she realized that if she lost the ring, only herself would be to blame. She responded at once to this responsibility which had been put upon her. She did her best to control herself; but it was hard, and after a period of happy calm she gave way to one of her fits. Her grief was tragic when she had to take her ring from her finger and give it over; but she understood the conditions and unhesitatingly complied, without the least trace of black feeling against her mother, and blaming herself alone for the punishment which she suffered. She won the ring back by a period of self-control, then had another wilful fit, lost it again, and after a hard struggle regained it once more. She still possesses the ring — and possesses it, as she clearly recognizes, because she has managed to keep herself under control. This experience

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at self-punishment and self-control has been a profound lesson to her, and has been a very definite source of development.

We want no parental autocrats in the home, and we want no childish subjects. For best results we want the nearest possible approach to pure democracy. The ultimate purpose of obedience, of thoughtful discipline, of just and kindly punishment (inflicted by the child itself whenever possible) is the establishment of such respect and understanding and harmony between the child and its parents that friction and irritation will be removed, that "obedience," in its old rigid sense, will become undesirable and obsolete, and that "punishment" inflicted by one in authority will cease to be. The child's will-power will then have a free and rounded development, with the result that it will be a splendid driving-energy for happiness and achievement which will be always under a perfect self-control.



## CHAPTER VII

### UNSPOILING THE SPOILED CHILD

"You have told us how to develop the best in our children and how to prevent the growth of what is bad — but what about the child who is *already bad*? I knew nothing about children when I married, and now my oldest child, a boy of eight, is utterly unmanageable. He is — oh, how I hate to say it! — he is destructive, he delights in maliciously teasing animals, he is a bully among weaker children, he is impertinent to me. I'm sure no other mother has such a problem. What can I do to change him?"

This is the substance of an appeal made to me by a frantic mother. This mother was sincere in her despair, but she was mistaken in thinking hers an isolated case. The "spoiled child" is everywhere. My records

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are thickly sprinkled with complaints which present variations of this problem. "My child, whenever refused anything, bursts into crying and cries violently until he gets it." "My little girl demands that I be constantly with her, and every time I try to leave her there is trouble." "When we have company my boy behaves exactly as he pleases, is rough, or rudely assertive, or does things which he thinks are 'smart,' and whenever I have tried to check him he has shamed me by making a frightful scene before the guests." "My child insists always on having his own way, he demands the best of everything, he will play no game unless he is the leader."

And so, on and on go the cases of the "spoiled child" —and in each case the mother has ended with the same earnest query, "How can my child be made different?"

In part of what I am about to say in the way of an answer, I may seem to be playing too frequently upon one or two strings. But though this may appear to be monotonous, it is a monotony that can not with safety be avoided. The physician, called

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in to attend a sudden illness of your child, will take the child's temperature, examine his pulse, inquire what he has eaten; and some such preliminary routine he will follow in every new case he is called in to treat, however different may be the diseases. The same liberty of repetition I must also claim. In preceding chapters I have written that the way to begin to cure a child of faults that may interfere with his best development is first to examine ourselves to learn if we have any character-disease which may be a constant source of new infection to the child; and that if we have, our cure must start with the cure of ourselves. Just so, if we would cure our spoiled child, we must begin by looking into ourselves; the spoiled child usually means a parent who spoiled him. If our child is spoiled, what is there in us that did it?

There may have been any number of things. Perhaps the greatest cause behind the spoiled child is the mother's unthinking indulgence during the earliest years of the child's growth, when his habits are forming. The mother

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may be unwilling or may shirk to meet directly and frankly the disagreeable situations which arise. Rather than have an open conflict with her child, making clear to him once and for all what is expected of him, and what he can expect from others, the mother too often yields to the child's caprices, or satisfies his selfish, unreasonable demands. Thus, each successful overawing of his mother strengthens the child's capricious selfishness. Or perhaps the child may have been sickly for a long period, and the mother may have felt that he could not be crossed, and may have arranged the life of the entire family so that it revolved around the child's life — and the child may have become aware that he was a little sovereign.

In such cases, the cure must be started by the mother's realization of the injury her policy is doing her child. How one mother was brought to see the seriousness of such a situation as this, and how she handled it, may serve to suggest to other mothers how the tragedy of the spoiled child may be avoided. This mother had a

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son of eight, naturally bright and kind, but who unfortunately from birth had suffered from attacks of asthma; also she had a son of twelve, strong, generous, energetic, and with a keen sense of justice. Because of his misfortune, the younger brother, Sam, was given the best of physical care, and was shielded by every precaution against over-stimulation. Further, he was allowed to grow up with the understanding that his older brother, David, should yield to him upon all points — should, in fact, be almost his personal servant. Naturally he made demands on David which were unjust and unreasonable. If David would not at once obey, which sometimes he did not, Sam would instantly begin to cry, which invariably brought the mother to the scene. Fearing dreadful consequences from his irritation, she would put all the blame on David. Frequently, without question, she promptly punished the older boy for bringing on such situations.

For a period David received a rebuke and punishment as a matter of fact. He was

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subdued by fear into believing in the dreaded consequences that might result from his brother's illness. But one day when Sam's crying caused the mother to chastise David for some trivial offense that Sam weepingly announced, and the mother told David that, as further punishment, he could not play baseball that afternoon, baseball being his greatest pleasure, David stood for a moment as if dazed by what had happened to him. Then, as if moved by some force outside himself, he flung himself upon his little brother and pommeled him with all his boyish strength.

A scene followed between the mother and David which need not be described here; but David finally managed to express the injustice of the whole situation. Then he declared that he would not stand his mother's treatment or his brother's tyranny another day—he would run away from home. The mother, in an awakened agony for David, for the first time began to see what was happening—that little Sam was being made into a selfish prig, and that, as

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serious as was his physical trouble, even more serious would it be for him to grow up a spiritual cripple.

The mother decided then and there that, despite Sam's physical condition, he was never again to have his way, if his way was unjust and unreasonable. She told him that from that day on, unless he could play justly and fairly, unless he could give as well as take in his play, he could not play with his brother; and since his physical condition did not permit him to play freely at large, he would have to play all by himself in a single room at home. This program was strictly adhered to. The first time the mother discovered that Sam was unfair and selfish in his play, she took him right out of the game and put him in a room entirely by himself. Sam was astonished at this change in his mother's attitude and protested violently. The mother, though fearful of results, let him protest without changing her decision, and soon Sam learned that his mother was in earnest. Several such unpleasant experiences absolutely cured Sam of his habit

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of unreasonable demands, and also made life happier for all concerned.

The problem presented by the child who cries violently until he gets what he wants, is a very common one. The child who has this habit is almost invariably a child who has learned from experience that crying hard, and crying long enough, is the most successful method for securing his ends. Sometimes this practice originates from what some parents claim are absolutely unavoidable circumstances — one instance, being a sickly child, such as I have just cited — which, the parents consider, require that the child be not irritated, crossed, or annoyed in any way. A child so treated, quickly and naturally learns the great value to himself of showing irritation. This coddling in childhood usually develops a selfish, self-centered, self-seeking adult, who, in the end, pays a heavy penalty for it all by being generally disliked.

This use of the cry as a business method by the child is a comparatively simple variety of "spoiledness" to cure, if the



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mother goes at the affair whole-heartedly, and does not allow herself to weaken and yield in the end. When the child wants a certain thing and begins to cry for it, if what he desires is just and right for him to have, under no circumstances should the thing be given him while he continues his fit of crying. The mother should say simply and firmly to the child, "Of course, Mary, you may have it just as soon as you stop crying." When the child meets the condition the promise must be kept.

On the other hand, if a child is crying for something that is wrong for him to have, or wrong for him to have at that particular time, the mother should, with equal frankness and firmness, tell the child that he can not have it. If the child is old enough to understand reasons, give him the reasons; if not, make a clear, simple, brief, and direct statement, and let it go at that. The mother should go about her affairs, practically paying no more attention to the child, leaving him to cry it out. Crying will not hurt him. Except when frightened or

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physically injured, a child cries solely to attract attention. When he perceives that his crying is getting him no attention, he wearies of the performance. After a few such experiences the child will learn that his mother means what she says, and that his crying will bring no results, and he will shortly give up this unpleasant practice.

A chief point to remember in this connection is that you must prove to your child, in your everyday relationship with him, that what is reasonable and right for him to have, he shall have, and that what is wrong or harmful for him to have, he can not have under any circumstances. You must strive to establish in the child a perfect confidence in your sense of justice. And this confidence you can hope to secure only by first giving adequate thought as to what really are the child's rights.

The type of "spoiled child" who is destructive, who delights in teasing animals or engaging in malicious mischief, is generally a child whose mental, nervous, or physical energy has not been constructively

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utilized or directed. Therefore his energy escapes in malicious and destructive activities. Back of all his "spoiledness" there may be only, or chiefly, a suppressed desire. The cure is obvious — an interesting and constructive outlet for his natural energy.

"Joe is impossible to have around the house, he is so incorrigibly mischievous!" a mother complained to me. "He simply takes the house apart! He meddles with every clock, lock, or screw, and we never know what awful thing is going to happen next." To illustrate, she told me of an unpleasant experience the family had had on account of Joe's wicked mischievousness in the early fall, when the steam had first been turned on. It seemed to them for a while as if the whole house was going to be blown up, for steam was escaping everywhere. Joe calmly came forward and announced that he knew what was the matter, that he had unscrewed certain valves to see what would happen, and that he knew how to fix those valves. This, to the

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mother's great surprise, he did. "And," concluded the mother, "I *fixed* Joe, to help him remember not to meddle again with the valves!"

It was very plain that what this "spoiled child" needed was not punishment or suppression of his mechanical inclinations, but a chance to make use of them. I advised the mother to have Joe join a mechanical class in a boys' club-house in the neighborhood. I knew that in connection with that class the boys also had gymnastic instruction under a competent leader. This proved to be exactly what Joe needed. He found great pleasure in his new classroom, he learned the use of certain mechanical devices there, and before very long Joe, instead of being an annoyance to everybody, became a very genuine source of pride to the household. He had a corner in the house which he called his "shop", whence emanated all kinds of original and ingenious mechanical toys.

The child who maliciously teases animals does it perhaps out of idleness, or because

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he has never been trained or taught to treat animals kindly, or because he has seen those about him careless and unkind to animals. Little children are cruel without meaning to be cruel or knowing that they are cruel. Kindness and sympathy for animals can best be developed in children through actual personal experiences. Every little child should have a chance, and should be required to care for some living, growing thing, animal or plant. Only through such practices can the finer human sympathies and instincts in the child be awakened and developed.

The desire and the habit in a child to tease others is often the direct result of that child's home environment. It is among the commonest of parents' sins to tease their little children. I do not need to suggest particulars here; most of us can supply them from our own experience. These thoughtless practices on the parents' part are wicked, and it must be expected that wicked practices will yield wicked fruit.

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The "spoiled child" whose outstanding trait is that he is a bully, has usually been made so by indulgence and over-protection, and by lack of active life among his equals. The small bully, like the grown-up bully, is rarely a bully among persons he knows to be as good as he is. This small bully has usually been made self-conscious and self-centered by over-attention paid to his cute, childish pranks and expressions. He is the boy who usually *boasts* of all the wonderful things he can do. He can go into the cold sea up to his neck, yet in actual performance will begin to lose courage when the water reaches his waist. He can climb up the highest tree, and in reality he is afraid to go beyond the first branches. This sort of boy usually manages to play with children younger and weaker than himself, which he should never be allowed to do if he is to be saved the humiliation of growing up into a cad and a coward.

Perhaps the rather severe method one wise father used in curing his little boy of this most undesirable trait will be sug-

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gestive to others of how to handle their problem. This wise father, when his nine-year-old Jim returned from a summer in the country, realized that his boy had been playing practically all his vacation with children smaller than himself, and had learned to take advantage of them. The father made it his business to get Jim to play with a group of good, strong, clean boys of his own strength. The father prepared himself for the worst, and was not disappointed. At the end of the first afternoon, the boy returned home with a black eye, blubbering of the terrible things that had been done to him, and naturally expecting his father's sympathy and attention. But, to Jim's surprise, the father did not seem one little bit upset or concerned, nor did he seem over-sympathetic. To the boy's complaints the father calmly replied: "Doubtless, Jim, you deserved what you got. I hope it will help you to remember to behave decently and honorably the next time you play with your friends." Continued contact with this group of his

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equals soon cured the boy of his habits of boasting, intimidation, and unfairness.

The variety of spoiled child who misbehaves when guests are present has various explanations. Perhaps the reason for his bad manners in company is the lack of cultivation of good manners in his everyday home life. Or perhaps the child has learned that his parents, for the sake of keeping up appearances, will avoid meeting an issue in the presence of guests; and the child uses this knowledge to take any liberties he chooses. Or perhaps, while entertainment in plenty has been provided for his elders, none has been provided for him, and he is supposed to sit quietly and mannerly through an affair whose every moment bores him.

This last is a point worth dwelling upon. If you don't wish your child to develop this particular sort of "spoiledness", then first of all strive to make courtesy, kindness, and thoughtfulness the standard of his everyday behavior; and second, when company is present, provide for the child an occupation which will prove more interesting than mis-



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behaving before the family friends. I know mothers who make it a point, when they plan to entertain of an afternoon, to arrange an equally pleasant afternoon for their children. If the mother has room in her own house, she invites one or two of the child's small friends to play with him. Otherwise, she arranges for him to visit a little friend away from home. Children should, as far as possible, be spared from attendance at any grown-up entertainment, for they can not possibly share in it with any benefit to themselves. They are always over-stimulated, often taken advantage of, frequently used for the grown-ups' pleasure, and usually the little child pays for it by a nervous reaction.

Perhaps there is no type of spoiled child more obnoxious than the child who is an autocratic egotist, who always wants the best of everything, who always forces himself forward, who takes first place by his mere self-assertiveness. I hardly need say that I do not include here the child who wins prominence by his merit, or is chosen to

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leadership by the free action of his fellows. This child, beneath his obnoxiousness, may have really valuable gifts; but, unless properly disciplined, he is in certain danger as he grows to maturity of using his strength, his initiative, and his powerful personality for selfish and ruthless ends, which will be injurious to those about him and fatal to the larger person he might have been.

To unspoil this type of child is not easy, but it can be accomplished if the method of treatment is consistently applied. The foundation of this treatment is to place the child upon a par with other children and to maintain this attitude firmly. Never accept any of his assumptions of superiority, and even ignore him whenever possible. A child of such a character naturally needs strict supervision in his play — in fact, in all his social relationships. The person or persons closest to him, his family in particular, should see that in no way does he get any but his fair chance to lead or to be prominent. In his play with other children

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he should not be allowed to lead except when his turn comes naturally. His teacher should be asked to see that in school he gets only the attention that is due to him. At the table he should be required to await his turn, and in all his home relations he should be taught that he is only one member of the family, and has no rights superior to any other member's. Ample time must be allowed for this kind of child to gain his balance, and great care should be taken not to remind him continually of his egotism, not to shame him with it, not to "throw it up to him." This course will only embitter him and may even stimulate him to be more domineering. Even while we are trying to hold our strict attitude toward him, we must remember to treat him with utmost consideration and justice. We want to be sure to preserve all the power of personality and all the true quality of leadership that he may possess.

In handling this problem, we must frankly recognize from the start that, serious and difficult as it is to train a child to his

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highest capabilities, even when one starts to work correctly in the child's infancy, it is not nearly so difficult as is the task of *unspoiling the spoiled child*. Here, first of all, must come the eradication of the bad habits, which often are deeply rooted. Only after we have started eradication can we begin the sowing and cultivation of the desirable new habits. This means double work, it means double time, it requires even more sympathy, intelligence, and application than does the right training of the little child from the beginning. In giving this frank warning to mothers, I have no desire to frighten or discourage them. On the contrary, I wish to prepare them for their serious task, and to stimulate them to keep up their courage and to persist, even though they do not see immediate results. Mothers facing the problem of a spoiled child must realize that results can not be wrought by magic, that they will come slowly and only through hard work. Attacking the problem with determination and patience, and expecting little in the beginning,

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a mother need have no doubt that in the end she will remake her child, save him from his present faults, and bring out the very best there is in him.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PERSON YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE

"TEN years I have struggled to get hold of myself — and now look at me!" she said with throbbing bitterness. "I am a wreck, a failure, an utter failure, and my life is nothing but misery."

"You a failure!" I exclaimed in some wonderment, for she was fortunately placed as far as worldly circumstances were concerned. "What can have made you a failure?"

"My mother!" she cried. "I have my own mother to thank for it all! My mother always said that she did everything for me to make me happy. Indeed, she did do everything for me — everything to make me the person *she wanted me to be*. She gave me every material indulgence, gave me everything except a chance to be *just myself*. She

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never knew me; somehow never understood me. To escape, to gain freedom to what I craved to be, I married — and married without love and without thinking what marriage should mean. At twenty-nine I am the most miserable woman in the world!"

My friend spoke truly of her present self; her life indeed was a failure. And yet, as I came to know her better, and in imagination could look back and see her as a child, I perceived that this twisted, embittered young woman had been rich in the natural gifts which should make a normal, happy, useful being. Her tragedy is all the greater and more poignant because she realizes that it could have been avoided if only her personality had been discovered and understood and allowed normal development. She is now physically and nervously too disorganized, and her habits of work are too deranged, for her ever to piece her broken life together into the admirable whole it might have been. It takes a person of very unusual physical energy and character endowment to overcome at maturity the handicaps of bad train-

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ing or no training and remake himself or herself into a strong, well-balanced person.

This young woman's broken life is one of many similar cases that have come under my professional observation: cases where the parents, through ignorance, or laziness, or soul-blindness, or belief in one formula for dealing with all children, or plain unawareness of their opportunity, had never looked for the person their child might have become — cases, as far as great development is concerned, in which the only comment that can now be made is "too late." But this same method of handling infants and children, and this same blindness to great opportunities, exists today, and *with today's children it is not too late*. The finding the person that is in the child, and the development of that person, is the great problem to which we must here address ourselves.

At the very start of our training of our children — and here is the foundation of all I shall say in this chapter — we mothers and fathers must realize that every human being, from his birth, is a distinct individual with



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his own peculiar gifts, traits and qualities; with a something distinctly his own, a something which should make him in some degree different from everybody else. To a great extent, the effect of school training and home training has been to destroy this best essence of the child; has been to make children more or less alike. Such a course is wrong; it fails to make the most of our children; a child so trained is, in a manner of speaking, a factory product — one of thousands or millions who have been turned out on a standardized pattern. A child whose personality is discovered, and whose personality has been given or allowed well-rounded development, is an infinitely bigger and more useful embryonic adult than would the same child be had he been turned out on the factory plan. He is *himself*, and all of himself; he has something fresh (perhaps not big) to give to life, and life has more to give to him.

Of course I hardly need say that when I speak of your child's personality, I do not refer to outstanding manifestations of character which may be merely over-grown faults

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— such as egotism, smartness, a domineering spirit. We must be careful not to mistake over-developed faults for the child's great strengths — though of course those faults may be symptoms of good qualities or may indeed be good qualities that have been perverted.

“But how can I discover the person my child might be?” parents will inquire.

This question represents the first great step in our endeavor. No blanket answer, covering all cases, can be given this query. We must realize that every child is a separate question and has a different answer. That answer can only be found in thoughtful observation of the individual child. We must watch, and study, and be most careful; and even after we think we have made the discovery, we must not proceed along rigid, unchanging lines. Our policy must be elastic, to allow both for our possible mistakes, and for the appearance of new qualities in the child.

But here are a few hints as to how, through observation, you may seek the answer to this

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question yourselves. To consider only a few traits, and here I am citing some that are considered undesirable — is your child irresponsible, inattentive, careless in small details, does he at times seem uninterested in the ordinary things about him? Ask yourself what, deep down, these traits may mean, and what may be their cause. Mistakenly, you may ascribe this behavior to laxness of mind, or even stupidity; but these symptoms may mean that the person in your child is dominated by imagination — and imagination, whatever else in the course of your training you may seek to add to it, is the quality that will contribute most to this child's growth and usefulness.

Is your child impulsive, impatient, of a violent temper? Again you must go far beneath these surface symptoms. This behavior may mean that the person in your child has emotional strength, an invaluable spiritual gift when properly developed and brought under the child's control.

Is your child contrary, obstinate, rebellious, habitually disobedient? This may mean that

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your child has initiative, and an original, independent mind — invaluable gifts which enable the child to discover things for himself and makes him resent thoughtless rules, purposeless prohibitions and routine answers that he recognizes as superficialities or evasions. Such unpleasant manifestations may be no more than the natural results of the repression or improper handling of such a personality.

Perhaps I can best indicate the mistakes we make in our children, and can best suggest how to find the person in your child and how to develop it, by giving two or three cases that have come under my observation in the course of my professional practice, where an attempt has been made to help the child be *itself* and be the *best of itself*. I may here state that there is no better way and no better place for studying the little child than in his own home and in the ordinary routine relationships of his life. I can not say too often that it is the daily routine existence that is the greatest influence and factor in the young child's life, and if we really want to

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understand the child it is in his own world that we must observe him.

"I wish you would tell me what makes my Heloise so nervous and so irritable," a distracted mother asked me. "I try in every way to please her by giving her things and doing things for her, I try to keep her calm and avoid scenes with her — her nurse does everything for her — yet she can not be pleased — she pinches, kicks, throws things at us — we never know what she is going to do next. I even had her examined by a physician, but he could find nothing wrong with her."

In Heloise's home I found the attitude towards the child exactly what her mother had described. Both the mother and the nurse, a faithful, precise, kindly woman, anticipated Heloise's every thought and wish. The little girl's toilette was typical of her whole existence and all that surrounded her: it was perfection itself, even to the curls which were carefully put into curl papers every night. The nursery was large, airy, attractive, filled with materials and toys kept in most precise order; but they were as

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inaccessible to the child's hands and interest as her nurse's well-intentioned, dried-up imagination was to the little girl's soul. There was nothing in that room Heloise could take or do without the faithful nurse being at her elbow giving it to her or offering help in some way.

Though my particular business was to study Heloise, I took great pains at first apparently to pay no attention whatever to her. I did not, as is so commonly done by adults, force myself upon the child or try to make artificial or conventional conversation with her. I waited for the opportunity to find a point of common interest between us ; once I had that, I knew we would become friends, and I would have free access to her if I had the imagination and the grace to understand her. While I apparently paid no attention to Heloise, I watched her every act and expression, and the most trivial acts told me, as they can tell every student of little children, the story of the child's make-up.

At luncheon I noticed that while Heloise's table manners were conventionally good —

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she handled her fork, knife and spoon properly, sat up straight and was extremely neat in taking her food — she ate without pleasure; she was spiteful in little matters; she refused to eat certain things and to comply with certain requests, it seemed, for the sheer pleasure of doing the opposite of what was asked of her. Heloise gave the impression that at any moment she was likely to explode; and I felt the tense fear of the nurse and mother of the gunpowder of the child's "nervousness." Later I had a chance to observe Heloise at play in her perfect nursery. There, as at the table, she seemed to spend her imagination and strength in opposition and rebellion rather than to use them in happy, constructive expression. She would demand half a dozen things at a time, which were handed to her promptly and graciously by her nurse; she would look at a box of blocks, upset them — perhaps start stringing beads and do that for a few minutes — then take her colored crayons, scrawl over a few pieces of paper — then go for the next thing. And so on, getting no value or pleasure out

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of her playthings and continually growing more irritated with them and with the nurse and mother.

This behavior suggested to me what was the real person behind this unpleasant child, and also what was the matter. A later experience confirmed my impression and gave me the key to the girl's character. After Heloise and I became better acquainted, I invited her to play in my play-group — an informal organization under my direction where children play freely and independently under the guidance of a director who makes it her business to be just a playmate, one of the group. Heloise quickly found herself at home in it, keenly enjoying its freedom; she played with abandon, yet was gracious and kind and was responsive to the chief rule of the group, "equal opportunity of pleasure and play for all." This playing brought out qualities in her entirely unrevealed in her home life. Everything went pleasantly until toward the end of the afternoon when her nurse appeared to take her home. Suddenly the delightful, exuberant, playful spirit in



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Heloise turned into passionate fury. At the sight of the nurse she stamped her foot and screamed, "I will not go with you! — I don't like you — go away!" And not having any weapon in her hand with which to strike, she spat at her.

I tried to get hold of Heloise's unbounded anger. At first she could hardly speak. Every nerve in the little body was tense. I did not meet passion with passion — the common error. I took her hands in mine, tenderly and sympathetically, talked to her in an even voice, quietly and slowly; and finally I managed to calm her, and she told me why she treated her nurse as she did. "She is a wicked, wicked woman — she watches me all the time!" was the significant explanation.

To diagnose this case, to discover who the person in Heloise really was, was now simple enough. Here was, as her conduct in the free atmosphere of my play-group had shown me, an original, energetic, imaginative little child of unusual strength, with a keen desire to make use of her powers, to be active and

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self-dependent. But she was tied hand and foot, was locked in chains — golden chains, to be sure, but chains none the less. It was in her natural effort to free herself from them that she struck out indiscriminately; her kicking, biting, pinching, her nervousness and irritability, were merely inevitable reactions, and were the child's undisciplined protests against her guarded, oppressive existence. What Heloise needed for the development of the true person in her, and this I am happy to state her mother was quick to perceive, was just a normal opportunity to use her energies in constructive, active experiences. A program was arranged which allowed the child to use her powers and to be dependent upon herself. In an astonishingly short time the agonizing, mysterious irritability and nervousness were removed by giving a suitable outlet to the energies behind them and by establishing a simple, sympathetic, co-operative relationship in her home life; and Heloise was started on the road to being herself.

In trying to discover the person our child

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might be, not only must we observe the child in his own natural activities, but we should put materials and activities in his way to choose from, to afford him new opportunities through which he can express his interests and reveal himself. Perhaps the record of how one child through the patient, thoughtful work of his teacher barely escaped from being relegated to the hopeless mass of the dull and weak-minded, and was discovered to be an unusual personality, may prove a warning to those of us who are careless and may bring hope to many parents.

Jack is ten years old. He was a problem to his mother from the time he emerged from infancy, when he could be managed through his mere helplessness. He was a problem at school from the day he entered it. He was backward in all the routine work of the class-room; he was promoted from one class into the other chiefly because each teacher in turn wanted to get rid of him, and because, though he did work inferior to the youngest in his class, he was from two to three years older than the oldest in that class. The

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chief complaints against him were that he was listless, indifferent, uninterested in his work. He gave the impression that "he was not there." One teacher said, "It would have been fâ easier for me to handle him if he were actually bad rather than colorless and negative." His parents were in despair about him and when he was finally put into the third grade the mother frankly told the teacher that she realized what a task Jack was, and that if he did not improve after a fixed period she would take him out of school and place him in an institution for backward children.

This particular teacher, however, happened to be one who took a special interest in the problem child. Instead of accepting him on his reputation of being stupid, dull, lazy, indifferent, she made it her business really to find out for herself what was the matter. One of her methods for studying the children in her class was to give them a period in which they could freely express themselves. One day she chose a half dozen children to entertain the entire class in their own original way.

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Jack was one of the six selected. On the appointed day every child in turn did his little stunt; some jumped a rope, others acted as circus clowns, still others recited bits of verse. Jack, to the utter astonishment of the teacher and the class, recited a very, very long and serious poem with many words that to him were unpronounceable. The teacher in a casual manner asked Jack what it was that he liked best about the poem. The boy, with what sounded like enthusiasm from this almost expressionless being, answered, "I love the birds and flowers in it."

This was the first time, after many weeks of effort, that the teacher had secured an expression from Jack showing a definite interest in anything. This was the first hint that Jack might care for Nature. From that day the teacher made it her business to pay particular attention to Jack during the Nature Study hour, when a special teacher of the subject was in charge of the class. She noticed that Jack paid more attention during that hour to what was said and done than during any other period, but the Nature

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Study teacher, having been led to expect no response from Jack, made no effort to get any from him and so the boy was practically left to himself. Shortly after that the regular teacher<sup>3</sup> spent an afternoon with her class in the park. Without making her attention too conspicuous she carefully observed Jack. Jack changed into a different child; here he was in his element; he came right out of his shell; he was alive to everything; he noticed every bird, every flower, he was interested in every bug; he asked questions, intelligent, live questions.

Right there and then the mystery of this stupid boy was solved for his teacher. The world other people had been forcing him to live in was not a live world for him, hence his indifference to it. But this nature world was a live world, and his soul responded quickly and readily to it; he was sensitive to all its colors, forms and sounds.

From that time the teacher adopted a new course with Jack. Instead of demanding that he maintain the average standard of the routine work in the class-room, she made his

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particular gift and interest contribute toward his own and the class's development. She made him responsible for the class-room's plants. She asked him to bring in anything that interested him, and soon the class-room had its little museum of natural history. Soon this Jack, who had been the slow-wit of his class, became a high light in it, bringing into it new life and new interest. The teacher, *who had discovered the real Jack*, won his complete friendship, and through her understanding of him she was able to make an appeal to him to take an interest even in the subjects which had been uninteresting to him. When I last saw the teacher she was filled with admiration for Jack — "I truly believe that Jack has the makings of a genius in him." His general progress by the end of the year was so great that he was ready to be promoted two classes instead of one.

I wish to drive home, even at the danger of repetition, that if there is one place where we parents sin cruelly against our children — and this sin may be almost as bad as utter

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neglect of the child — it is in our only too common method of expecting, even forcing, our children to become what *we* would like them to become, rather than trying to find out what *they* are best fitted for, and letting them develop accordingly — in trying to mould them into the shape *we* would like them to assume, rather than in allowing them to develop into the shape Nature intended them to have. No matter from what motive we bring this pressure upon our children, even though that motive be love, disaster in some degree, a loss of what might have been, is sure to follow.

For the development of the person in your child, once that person is known, no fixed rule can be laid down. Again the method must be adapted to every child; again the procedure is up to the good sense of the parent. But while there is no method for all, there is one *principle* for all: and that is to give the child a normal outlet for his individual qualities, and free access to whatever may help him. Combined with this wise care of his native strengths, must be training



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and discipline of the qualities in which the child may be weak; for while we want the best in our child saved and developed to its very highest, we do not want a lop-sided child; we do not want a child who is powerful and positive in just one aspect, and helpless and negative in all others.

I do not mean to imply that every seemingly stupid child is a misjudged genius; nor do I mean to suggest that every seemingly clever child is an embryonic person of rare talents. Our primary business is not to make geniuses — though incidentally as the result of our efforts we may, and probably will, increase their number by saving those who otherwise would go to waste through never having been understood and through never having been given the opportunities that fitted their natures. Our primary business is to develop *persons*; persons who, as I have said, are *themselves* and not mere duplicates of other children; persons in whom the individual quality has been cultivated to its richest flower and fruitage. By doing this we best discharge our high duty as parents; and as

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for the children, the result will be a generation in which each child is of more value and a source of greater happiness to himself, to his parents, and to the world in which he lives.

## CHAPTER IX

### A NEW VISION OF PLAY

THE great room was a palace of glittering magic. Color was everywhere, a hundred bewildering shades — and in miniature there were all the creatures of the world it seemed, in the shapes nature had given them, or in shapes grotesquely distorted to provoke a laugh. Indians, Esquimaux, hairy Russians, Dutchmen with globular abdomens; great St. Bernard dogs, horses, camels, elephants, sheep, crocodiles, brilliant lizards. And dolls! — a veritable congregation of all the high-bred beauties of the world, with dazzling toilettes, and with boudoir and bedroom sets of gilt or mahogany.

That toy-shop seemed a thrilling monument to the tender thoughtfulness of the twentieth century for the child.

Just ahead of me a young couple were

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making selections from this bewildering prodigality. Their attention wavered, and finally centered on what might perhaps be termed as Act I — a plaster of paris cabbage tinted a very stagey garden green. The clerk twisted a key, a music box in the cabbage's interior struck up a tinkling overture — and then, Act II, from the centre of the cabbage there slowly arose a white rabbit. For a moment he stood upright, with staring pink eyes — and then, Act III, to the toy orchestration of the music-box, the rabbit slowly sank from sight back into the cabbage head. The music stopped. The play was over.

"Very amusing, and very ingenious," persuasively remarked the clerk-showman.

The woman turned to her husband, her eyes warm with a young mother's affection. "I do think it will amuse Jim a lot," she said.

"Yes, it is clever," admitted the husband. "I guess it will help keep the boy out of mischief for a while."

"You see your boy will have nothing to do but turn the key," deftly put in the salesman.

The cabbage was wrapped up, its price

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was paid down, and the loving parents hurried from the bewildering toy-shop homeward with their prize — to Jim, who was going to be “amused,” and “kept out of mischief,” all by the mere turning of a key.

An hour after I had witnessed this purchase — such a purchase, with just such affectionate motives, as is being made at something like the rate of a thousand per minute in this country — I was taking tea with an acquaintance whose little girl of five was playing in the same room. The child was prodigally supplied with toys and play materials, many of them excellent, but she was constantly running to her mother with interruptions.

“Oh, Nellie,” besought the irritated mother, “won’t you play with your things and let me have a little peace!”

“But I’m tired of them,” pouted the child.

“Then run outside and play.”

“I don’t know what to play.”

“Oh, play anything — only run along and give me a little rest!”

These two little scenes, the commonest of commonplaces in themselves, fitted together

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in my mind to form a significant whole. And that whole was in the nature of a great tragedy of child life. That whole was an almost complete exemplification of the average loving parent's conception of the purpose and possibilities of play. That whole presented the *present vision* of play. Play is to amuse the child. Play is to keep the child out of mischief. Play is to give the parent relief.

Yes, here is a tragedy — a tragedy that disturbs most of us not at all, because we are not conscious of its existence: the tragedy of splendid forces and magnificent opportunities, unrecognized, non-understood, that are unconsciously allowed to go to waste. Play can and should serve all the above-mentioned purposes. But it should and can do vastly more. For play, and the child's play instinct, together form one of the most valuable instruments at our command for the all-around development of the child.

It is easy enough to offer criticisms upon our present play. We need better and more sensible play materials, to be sure; we need

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the annihilation of the gaudy, degenerating rubbish that comprises three-quarters of the stock of the toy-shops; we need more intelligent methods of using existing material; and so one might go on, for a page or more. But what we need most of all, and first of all, because it is fundamental to all else, is a *new vision of play on the parents' part*, a new attitude toward play, a new conception of the tremendous possibilities that, unsuspected by the majority, are inherent in play.

The first step toward acquiring this new vision of play is an understanding of the needs and qualities and opportunities of childhood. I must be forgiven for dealing here and elsewhere in commonplaces; my excuse must be that much of the progress that our civilization is making is due to discovering a new significance in, or a better use for, matters which hitherto we have neglected or but half used. I know I am stating a commonplace when I say that the entire waking-time of the young child born in decent circumstances, save the time devoted to eating and dressing, is usually given to play; that is,

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from six to nine hours a day during four or five years the sole business of the child is play. The kindergarten, even in the case of the child who attends it, concerns itself with but a fraction of this time.

As I have said elsewhere, if one period of human life can be arbitrarily marked off as richer in possibilities than any other, these early years constitute that period. This is the time when the child's faculties are having their most rapid development, when its interests, fresh and vivid, are reaching out in every direction. Yet during this period all that is usually offered the child is play that engages only the child's most superficial interest and faculties — play that is no more than play, and play that is often a great deal less, or worse. And so opportunities, potentialities, are lost that never can be regained. And this because affectionate parents have never recognized the larger and richer mission of play.

Before going farther I wish to make plain that I do not undervalue play, nor the pleasure that it gives. On the contrary, I wish to



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emphasize the importance of play; I would add every atom of pleasure to the child's life that I could. But the pleasure given by play, the outlet it affords to the child's animal energies, the opportunities it offers 'for its physical development — these are functions of play that are generally recognized and accepted, and upon them I shall not dwell. It is with play's unrecognized values and possibilities, which constitute *the new vision of play*, that I shall deal.

The parent, to acquire a clear sense of the larger mission of play, must understand two things: first, what the instincts and faculties are which are budding and growing so rapidly at this period; second, the play materials which can be used effectively to develop these qualities. Of these two, the vastly more important is knowing the child. Only through a sympathetic understanding of the child, of the qualities and traits it is beginning to exhibit, can we get an intelligent idea of what play can do for it.

Curiosity, imagination, initiative, self-dependence — one could enumerate an almost

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endless list of qualities that must be looked for and cared for in connection with the child's play. Of these the most common and perhaps the most promising is curiosity. Few things are so important to the child's future as keeping his curiosity alive, for curiosity is the foundation of interest, of observation, of constructive sense. And yet few other qualities are so little understood and appreciated, and so frequently repressed.

How curiosity and imagination (and in the same way other qualities) are too often stifled, and how they can be made of use, can be illustrated by the case of a three-year-old boy who for a time was under my observation. His mother, who was affectionate and desired the best for him, complained to me that the boy gave her no peace, that he took no interest in his games, that he was destructive. I studied him for a time, and saw that upon the surface the mother's complaint seemed entirely true. A game would hold his attention but a moment or two; he would not play alone; he was clumsy in his play; and (for example) he would half complete formless

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piles out of his blocks only to send the structure flying with a petulant kick.

Further observation of the boy and conversation with the mother made clear to me that the mother, loving as she was, had, like too many mothers, given no serious thought to the child's curiosity and imagination. His questions had been considered a nuisance — or considered as "smart" and laughed at — or answered lightly, evasively and often untruthfully. The result was that the boy's interest had been stifled; play could not hold him because play had no *meaning* for him.

After this, I spent considerable time with the boy. I tried to animate his repressed curiosity; and soon we were constantly having conversations like the following, which burst on me one day out of a clear sky:

"Do horses sleep?"

"Yes, Fred," I answered.

"Do they sleep in houses?"

"In horses' houses," I answered.

"Do dogs sleep in houses?"

"In dogs' houses," I answered.

"Do birds have houses?"

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"Yes," I answered, "Birds' houses — nests, we call them when the birds make them."

"Tell me who else has houses," he demanded. And I mentioned the cow, the hen, the squirrel, the rabbit, and other animals familiar to him. Fred became intensely amused in this game of questions and answers. His interest quickened almost visibly.

I took him to visit the nearest well-kept stable. Here I allowed him to notice things for himself; guidance is desirable, but the child finds most pleasure in, and is most deeply impressed by, the things which he himself discovers. In this visit we learned where the horse is dressed to go out; where he sleeps and eats; we noticed how he gets light and air into his house. Another day we visited dog-kennels. The first time we went for a day in the country we visited barns, chicken-runs, looked at pig-sties and rabbit-holes.

Soon after these visits I noticed a decided change in Fred's playing with his ordinary, unpainted, wooden building-blocks — the same blocks with which he had before shown a clumsy, impatient inability to do anything.

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Here is a material which is used almost in every household, with practically no realization of the possibilities it holds for the development of the child. Instead of endless tracks which come from nowhere and lead to nowhere; instead of meaningless piling of blocks on top of each other; instead of these, stables, barns, kennels, farm-houses grew up beneath Fred's hands. At first these were very crude; often important details were omitted; but these omissions were always corrected, by the child himself.

I recall one incident when Fred built a really complete stable — floor, walls, windows, gable-roof, and manger — but left out the door. He called me with great pride to see what he had built. I expressed my approval, but asked him to excuse me for a moment until I returned. In another room I quickly cut out a horse from a magazine advertisement, led him in to Fred by a string, and asked him if he would keep the horse in his stable overnight. Fred was delighted with this idea. He took the horse from me and led him up to the stable.

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"Why, the stable has no door!" he cried, laughing at the discovery of his mistake. After this, there were no more "houses" built without some kind of doors.

It was only three months after that, when I came upon Fred who was just finishing an intricate arrangement of his wooden building-blocks. For a moment I looked puzzled.

"Makin' my house," Fred volunteered in a matter-of-fact way.

I looked more closely; and then I perceived that the child had in fact constructed a miniature flat modelled upon the one in which he lived. He had the entire plan correct, the hallway with the exact number of rooms opening from it; the exact number of windows in each room, and the correct positions of all the doors. Some of the doors were opened at an angle to show that they worked on hinges, and some were thrust apart to show that they ran on rollers. Tables, beds, and couches were in their proper places; in fact, not a single large detail of the apartment was missing.

This change in Fred was due solely to one

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thing, a changed attitude towards his childish faculties and toward his play. His faculties had been recognized, treated with respect, encouraged to find a natural expression. In consequence, his meaningless play had become meaningful to him; it engrossed his interest for long periods; it stimulated his observation, imagination, power of construction. Play had become a real instrument for his development. And to achieve such a result, there is no need to turn the child's world topsy-turvy. And there is no need for elaborate and costly paraphernalia. The chief requirement is to make intelligent use of the materials already existing and which are easily within the reach of a modest income. In so far as this proposal is a revolution it is merely taking time and faculties ordinarily neglected, and commonplace materials, and putting this waste, these commonplaces, to a great constructive use.

Play and the play spirit have great possibilities as a corrective of the faults of children; but one must of course be certain that the trait or behavior is in reality a fault, and

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one must of course be able to perceive what variety of play will best aid in such correction. Obedience, for example, can be taught through play far more easily than through punishment. Disobedience is as often the expression of a physical disorder as of a moral one; and this physical disorder can be corrected by training. During some period when the mother is with the child, preferably not at the end of the afternoon, the mother can improvise a game whose point is to see how quickly the child can change from doing one thing to doing another, how promptly he can obey commands or signals. For instance, the mother can say in order: Fly, run, skip, hop, jump, walk, bend, bow, walk on tiptoes, etc. The child is made most happy by this game provided the mother enters into it in a spirit of real play. The child then can be asked to give commands, and of course the mother should faithfully obey the child. This playful method gives the child an opportunity for exercise in the coördination of his mind and of his body, and in a surprisingly short time it may help the



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child to obey other requests as quickly and as promptly and as willingly as he does the commands given in this game.

But it should be held as a foremost thought, here and in all dealings with the child, that an order or request given a child must be a reasonable one. For if the child recognizes the request as unreasonable, he will rebel, disobedience will be fomented, and defiance will be developed instead of the harmony that should exist between parent and child.

Loudness of speech and unnecessary noisiness in walking and behavior can be corrected through some forms of what might be termed "quiet play." "Close your eyes, Billy, until you hear the ball strike the floor," you may say; and while Billy's eyes are closed you can walk softly to the opposite side of the room. You drop the ball, Billy opens his eyes, and he is astonished at how you got there so quietly. After this, you close your eyes and let Billy show how quietly he can go through the same procedure. In the matter of loud speaking, which children so readily fall into, the first step toward the

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correction of this really very disagreeable habit is never to talk or call loudly yourself. Here again some improvised silent game may be used. "Can you hear me, Billy?" you say very softly. "Bring me the red book from the table." This Billy does; after which you say: "Now ask me something, very, very softly, and see if I can understand." He whispers his request, and you straightway march off and do the thing — to the great glee of Billy. When Billy is afterwards unnecessarily noisy, a playful reminder of how nicely he had walked and talked in that game, which rouses in him the desire to do as well as he then did, will do far more for the child than a rebuke.

These are of course merely suggestions; the invention of the mother will easily supply dozens of other methods. But, to repeat, the aim of all should be to establish good habits through play. We must start on the principle that we can make doing a thing right just as much fun to the child as doing it wrong.

Play, more than anything else, can help

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to develop the child's social instinct: fairness, kindness, unselfishness. It can teach the child the value of material and labor, it can give him a sense of orderliness and fitness, and incidentally the child will not lack in manners, not the manners that one associates with sashes and stiffly starched little skirts and Johnnie's uncomfortable collars, but that genuine behavior which springs from a sincere appreciation of the rights of others, the "manners" which are a part of the child's character and not something "put on" for special occasions.

Play and the play instinct can be made a most valuable instrument for giving the child a keen but perfectly normal interest in those subjects which we usually classify under the head of "primary education." Not that I desire to encourage a forced growth of prodigies. On the other hand, as to prodigies, I feel somewhat inclined to the view of a little boy friend of mine whose father was reading to him from Evelyn's Diary about that marvellous child, young Evelyn, who at six could read Latin, Greek, French and who at seven

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died in the ripeness of scholarship. "Oh, father," cried my little friend, clapping a hand to his forehead, "isn't it awful to have a brain that hurts like that!"

It is the well-developed normal child that we are interested in; but our average children are far from being developed up to their normal capacities. The average child, long before it is of school age, can secure through the employment of its play instinct a fair start in reading, writing, and drawing and can find these occupations as pleasurable as any other form of play.

On the day that I am writing this, it so chanced, an acquaintance lunched with me. When a child under my charge, aged four, had finished eating, she excused herself, and in a business-like way announced, "And now I must paint." In a perfectly independent matter-of-course manner she put on her overalls with a high bib, moved a small light table to the window, got out her drawing materials and water-colors, and in a few quick strokes sketched (very crudely, of course) a woman she saw passing across the

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street. She laid aside pencil and with her paints she then blocked in the colors of the gown and hat, closely approximating the actual shades, and then touched up the face to suit her fancy. After three minutes of intense pleasure, the lady was completed, torn from the drawing pad, and another picture was begun.

"Why, she's a wonder!" exclaimed my friend, who had been quietly looking on.

I refuted her statement warmly; the child was merely a normal child whose every interest had been kept alive and given free expression.

"But how do you make her do that?"

"I do not make her. She does it because she wants to."

"Then how," persisted my friend, "did you get her to want to?"

What I told her was in brief as follows. The child's drawing was but a natural development of her previous training. Her earlier training in buttoning her own clothes and handling a knife, fork, and spoon had given her a bodily control, particularly a

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control of the hand and fingers, which had made the handling of a pencil easy and natural for her. There never had been any cramped, painful, clumsy effort such as we see, for instance, in the attempts to write of children whose parents have considered education as a matter to be deferred until 8:45 A.M. on a certain Monday morning in September after the sixth birthday. Also, she had early been made familiar with color — the colors of the objects which were intimately associated with her hourly life, the clothes she wore, the food she ate. Also, among her earliest playthings were paper and crayons, so that she can not remember when she began to scrawl. The child's drawing, therefore, was but a natural development of her previous training.

Now the principle behind my teaching of drawing was to recognize and engage the child's spirit of play; to make drawing an expression of the child's play spirit — to make it *real play* to her. "Now let us play a 'surprise' game," I would say to her. "Close your eyes until I say 'Ready' " —

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which Mary would always do. While her eyes were closed I would lay on her table before her a potato. "Now I'll close my eyes, and you make me a *big, big* surprise and draw me a picture of this potato. When it is done say 'Ready.'" I would then turn my back, or put my hands across my eyes, there would be a moment of scratching, and then an excited cry of "Ready!" At sight of the irregular circle filled in with brown crayon that represented her conception of a potato, I would be properly surprised and she would burst into little cries of pleasure — and then she would be eager to draw something else. Thus she made pictures of oranges, apples, pears, and afterwards colored them with crayons. And as she developed, she went on to more difficult familiar objects, chairs, tables, people.

Today, drawing is as natural a means of recreation with her as roller-skating or skipping a rope. She demands that she shall have a piece of French chalk whenever she goes out; and when there comes a lull in the play of her and her friends, she is most likely

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to go scurrying off to where there is a quiet stretch of walk, produce her chalk and proceed to cover the smooth cement with boys and girls and houses and trains.

There has been nothing like a formal drawing lesson; I would not know how to give one; and I am not at all concerned whether or not the child becomes an artist. The important thing, in my mind, is that the child's play instinct has found an additional medium of expression; that play, and most enjoyable play, too, is educating her to an ever more accurate control of her muscles (what would even a Rodin be without his marvellous dexterity of hand!), is developing her senses of form and color, is making instinctive with her the habit of close observation, and is developing her powers of memory and imagination.

I have dealt first with drawing for the reason that in children, as in the early races of man, the picture as a medium for expressing ideas represents an earlier stage of development than formal writing; and also for the reason that exactly the same principle



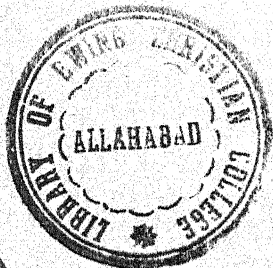
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that lies behind drawing as lies behind writing and reading — the principle of enlisting the child's play instinct. While touching on this subject of "formal education" I wish to say that any normal child, if properly<sup>7</sup> trained, can be taught to read and write and draw at the age of four — and to say further that reading and writing and drawing can be made new sources of pleasure. But I wish also to say, that though I regard this beginning of reading and writing at an early age as highly desirable, since it can be begun then just as well as two or three years later, and since it can be made a form of play to the child, I do not regard it as the great *fundamental* in child-training. The fundamental is to give your child self-control, control of his body, of his mind, of his emotions, and to keep its mind alert and eager, and to develop all its other qualities to their fullest and freest; if your child have such development, formal education may be begun at any age, and whenever begun it will be easy.

I hope that I have made clear that an

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essential part of this new vision of play is a genuine respect for the child's play. The parent must get the child's point of view in regard to play. The parent must realize that the child's play, especially when the result of that play is something that the child itself has created, or evolved out of its own being, with its own hands — is as important in the child's life as is the work of the parent, and should be treated with the same consideration and seriousness as the creation of an adult. I have marvelled again and again at the utter thoughtlessness and disrespect, even among cultivated people, that is shown for children's play. There are mothers who think nothing of disturbing a child at play; of upsetting, perhaps not meaning to do so, things that children built or made, without even apologizing or expressing regret. Yet these very mothers expect children to be respectful, considerate, and thoughtful of them and of their work.



## CHAPTER X

### GROUP PLAY AND HOW TO ORGANIZE IT

WHAT I have said in the preceding chapter refers especially to the play of the individual child in its own home, under the direction of its parent, or to its play when more or less alone. What I shall say in the following pages will refer especially to the play of the child as a member of a play-group, and will refer to the value of this kind of play to the child's development — though much of what I have written about home play can be adapted to play in groups, and much of what is said about group play can be adapted to the home.

Before going into detail concerning methods of organized group play, I wish to call attention to two of its fundamental advantages which play in no other form supplies: First, the particular opportunities that group

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playing offers the child; second, the great advantage it offers to the parent in being legitimately relieved for a period daily from the personal care of the child, knowing at the same time that the child is profiting in every way from this separation. First, as to the advantage group playing offers to the child which he cannot get either by playing alone or with his parent. As I have said elsewhere, however trivial a child's play may seem to us, it is profoundly important to him. It is not only his chief medium for physical activity, his diversion, his recreation and pleasure; but it is also his best opportunity for experimentation and adventure, and it can also be made the means of his mental and spiritual growth. Play is his great serious work — in a word, play is his life. Just as we adults learn most by doing things and from doing them, just so do children learn and develop best through their own various personal experiences. The child, therefore, who learns to play in harmony, in sympathy, with his equals — that is, with children of approximately his own strength, mentally, spiritually,

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and physically — is learning one of the most important lessons in human relationships. He is learning the fundamental principles of modern society — *how to live with his fellow-men.*

The child who learns to play fairly, to be unselfish in his play, to accept a defeat in good spirit — the child who learns early to realize that he is only one of many and therefore entitled only to a share of all pleasures and advantages that group playing can offer — the child who is scrupulously honest and accurate in his play, not because he is watched but because he is awakened to a keen sense of honor — such a child, once having acquired these habits in his play, will most likely, when he becomes an adult, apply the same standards in all his relationships in life. Self-control, equal opportunity, the spirit of fair play, these ideas which are the heart of group play, should also rule in one's intimate life at home, in one's business, in politics — in fact, in all of life's "games."

I do not in the slightest degree wish to minimize the immeasurable importance in

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the child's development of a beautiful home relationship; but it must be recognized that however careful a parent is in directing her child's play, however ethical and spiritual her personal relation with the child, what the parent can do is necessarily limited. The family circle is usually too small, especially where there is but one child, or too varied in age, to give a child an adequate opportunity in the home for practical democratic social intercourse.

Now as to the second fundamental point, the advantage group playing holds for the parent. The average mother who gives her entire life to her children, who is with them constantly, who does everything for them, and who prides herself in this devotion, is too frequently a mother who cannot in the end honestly boast either of the great success she has made of her children or the great success she has made of herself. In the majority of such cases of mother devotion, the children are likely to be found selfish, or dependent, or lacking in spirit; and the mother, when she should be in her prime, is likely to be

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physically and nervously worn, and to be mentally stagnant; and, further sad consequence of this continuous intimacy and contact, it is common to find an utter lack of sympathy between the parent and child, and frequently harmony and even love are absent. This is indeed a tragic reward for a mother's ceaseless devotion, but it is a condition, however reluctant we are to admit it, that is true, and, what is more, there is every good reason for its being true.

No work in the world makes greater demands on a human being than conscientious, thoughtful care of the little child. Few human beings are so marvellously constituted as to be able to give themselves completely over a period of years for from twelve to fourteen hours daily (a child under five usually requires attention of some kind the greater part of these hours, and if the care is not active none the less the responsibility is always present) and yet come out of such an experience nervously, spiritually, physically, and mentally unimpaired. Unless the mother knows how to organize her great task, the

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wear and tear on both mother and child of such an unbroken relationship is beyond endurance, and those of us who have observed such mothers and children know the penalty paid by both in irritation, in nervousness, and even actual illness.

Few things, therefore, are more essential for the best development and happiness of both mother and child than a daily period of separation from each other — a period in which the child can get away, with safety to himself, from the watchful intimacy of his mother, in which he can relax and learn to live independently of her — and a period during which the mother will be relieved of all responsibility of him and be given a chance to recuperate; a period in which she can forget her immediate personal cares, and interest herself in things outside of her household, from which brief vacations she can return refreshed, enriched in experience, broadened in sympathy, and therefore more fit for the performance of her duties as an intelligent and truly devoted mother.

These dangers, difficulties, needs, can be



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met to a great degree by organized group play. I do not mean to convey the impression that children now do not play in groups—they do indeed, but such group playing that exists is, with few exceptions, unorganized and is usually of chief benefit to those who can dominate the group. The group is usually ruled by sheer physical strength; here might is right. The most that any young child secures from it is an outlet for his physical energy, and that very often is at the expense of other children. In such group playing the tendency is for the strong to get stronger and the weak to get weaker; and if through this playing physical skill is developed, it is very frequently acquired at the expense of the child's character development. Such playing is certainly better than no playing; but its undisciplined, irresponsible, chaotic character is blamable for many pernicious habits among children; such playing, in many instances, cannot but make normal desires become perverted, and make normal energies and emotions twisted, destructive forces.

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Group play, to be most valuable for the very young, must be organized. Organized play should and in time will be taken over by our educational system — and mothers should strive for this end. But we cannot let growing children wait for this better day; in the meanwhile, it is within the power of mothers to supply this need, if only they will go about it with thought and determination. What I shall here say about group playing and how to organize a play group applies equally to the mothers of wealth and the mothers of modest income; to the mother who has no aid in attending her three or four, and to the mother who has a sort of nurse-policeman to escort each of her children to the park. The chief difference arises from the application of the ideas. This difference, in turn, arises from the difference in income; mothers of modest means may have as fine a spirit as the mothers who can afford a more elaborate equipment — and *spirit is the main thing*.

There are three preliminary practical problems connected with the formation of such a group. First of these is how the organization

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of mothers is to be brought about. I am going to leave this to the intelligence of the mothers, for conditions vary so widely in different communities that no suggestions can be made that will fit all. Besides, mothers have had the training in women's clubs, church societies, etc., to equip them for launching such an organization. The important points are that there shall be the inauguration and maintenance of a play group, and that this organization shall consist of enough mothers (say of twenty to thirty children) to supply sufficient funds for their coöperative plan.

The second of these practical problems is the securing of a proper space for the purpose, a large, light, airy room for very cold and wet days, with perhaps a vacant lot or a back yard or a safe roof or a corner in a near-by public park for nice days and summer use. Here also I must leave it to the good sense of the mothers to do their best under local conditions.

The third problem, and most important of all, is to secure a competent person to direct

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the play-group. I wish to emphasize here that it is not only necessary to have a trained person, but a person who can apply her training to bring out the best in the children and who will not try to make the children fit her training. She must have physical vigor, must come to her work fresh and with enthusiasm; she must have a spirit free and elastic enough to enter into the children's spirit, she must have a broad vision and, above all, must have a sympathetic understanding and a real appreciation of the needs of childhood and a realization of the value play holds for the child's best development. Here again the matter must be left to the good sense of the mothers, for the work of the person chosen to direct it.

Further, the play group, to give to the child what it should have, must be organized under following principles:

First, the group should meet within a short distance of the child's home, so that the child can easily get to it every day for a period of from three to four hours.

Second, it must be organized on the basis

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of a true democratic social spirit, whereby every one will share equally in all its advantages.

Third, it must be organized on the basis of self-dependence and self-government. Therefore, it must be organized with the view to give to the child a legitimate, pleasure-giving, constructive outlet for all his energies, physical, intellectual, emotional. This play group, without losing any of its pleasure-giving qualities, should help to develop the child's physical strength, his skill, his imagination; it should help him to gain harmonious control of his mind and body, and it should help him to acquire the habit of concentration.

I now come to what is for me the most important part of this subject — what can be done for and with the child in such a group. I will state that for several consecutive years, in connection with my work, I had under my daily direction play groups ranging in size from thirty children to over one thousand — though in the case of this latter figure I subdivided the children into many small groups.

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Perhaps I can best say what I have to say, and at the same time be more definitely suggestive and helpful, by giving here my personal experience with several of the play groups I have conducted.

The group I shall speak of first was made up of children who came from the most crowded tenement section of the city of New York, from homes where life meant a continuous struggle for existence and where the training of the child was only of last, and often of least importance. This particular group was subsidized; I am assuming, of course, that mothers who will be interested in starting such a play group will themselves finance the affair. The group met indoors in a large, bright, airy room. I have always made it a special point to have a bright and attractive room for this purpose; harmonious, orderly, peaceful surroundings are an essential factor in the child's training, and especially is a cheerful, peaceful atmosphere necessary for indoor playing on dismal days. It is impossible to estimate how much irritation, and nervous and physical energy, can be saved

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by appreciating the effect of material and human "atmosphere" upon the child.

The room was theoretically divided into two sections: one half of it, furnished with low tables and chairs, was reserved for quiet games and occupations; and the other section was used for games requiring skilful activity, such as quoits, ring toss, faba gaba, and skoop-it. On one side of the room, games, toys, and books were arranged on shelves within easy reach of the youngest and shortest child in the room. With the exception of certain games, which were distinctly for the older children, the games were *not* piled on top of each other but each game had a place of its own, so that the youngest child could, without too much exertion, replace the game he used in its own place as he had found it. I wish to call attention to this seemingly unimportant point because just such a simple arrangement can stimulate in a child the desire to keep things in order and to do things for himself and to take pleasure and interest in doing them.

The average attendance of this indoor play

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group was thirty children, the ages ranging from three to twelve. To impress every child with the reality of his being a part of the organization, each child was given a membership card — a neat little oblong of red cardboard, on it the name we had given the play group and also the child's name. This card entitled its possessor to all the pleasures and privileges that room had to offer, provided the child agreed that he would also share in its responsibilities. Naturally, the responsibility of each child depended on his age and his intelligence. The principal idea the children had to realize about the play group was that *every child's pleasure and happiness in that play group depended upon himself*. At first, some of the children found it quite difficult to understand this fundamental idea, and some did not really grasp it until after some rather unpleasant experiences, of which I will speak later. On the whole, the children adjusted themselves in a comparatively brief time to the simple conditions that were imposed.

There were no absolute, inviolable laws



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that governed this play group, but in spirit the play group was guided more or less by the following simple rules of conduct :

First. Every child was entitled to full freedom so long as his freedom did not interfere with the freedom and pleasure of others. For instance, every child was free to choose his own game, provided, of course, it was suited to his age and ability ; here, as director, I used my experience and best judgment to help any child who was in need of assistance to choose the right game. He was allowed to play with it a complete round — and longer, if he desired, but with the understanding that as soon as there was a call for it by any other member he was immediately to give it up.

Second. If a child wanted a particular game which was in use by someone else, naturally he had to await his turn ; if that child tried to take it away by force from the other child, he automatically forfeited his right to play that game that day.

Third. Every member of the play group was obliged to put the game he used in order and replace it where it belonged.

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Fourth. No one had a right to take another game before replacing the one he had used first.

Fifth. Every child was responsible for the cleanliness and order of the room. For instance, if a child cut and pasted pictures, he had to clear away the mess he had made before he could do anything else. If he balked at performing his share of the work — if, for example, the child refused to replace in their box the building blocks he was using and return the same to their place — the blocks were allowed to remain in precisely the condition in which he left them, the child was asked to sit quietly at a small table by himself where he was practically ignored and deprived of all activity. This enforced idleness, brought upon him by his own conduct, soon wearied the little child, and in most cases it was sufficient to bring the child to understand his mistake, and of his own accord he would slip over to the chaotic heap and eagerly put blocks in order and return them to where they belonged.

In connection with this method of enforcing our rules, I want to make clear that the

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punishment or disgrace, or the bitter lesson which the child had thus to learn for his own good, was never brought up as a basis for further unpleasantness to the child, was never "rubbed" into him, which is such a common sin among parents. Once the child realized his mistake and made an effort to do better, he was accepted on that new basis. This attitude helped to deepen the sympathetic comradeship between the child and the director. And because of this attitude, the child could not help but appreciate, first, that it was much pleasanter and simpler to do the right thing in the beginning; and, second, that the director was his friend, whose primary wish was to help him and not to punish him.

All these simple rules of "fair play," of "living and letting live," were impressed upon the children consistently, with courtesy, with kindness, with firmness, but never in a spirit of fault-finding — rather in a spirit of stimulating the best response from the child and taking it for granted that he was willing and anxious to do and give his best.

At this point, at the danger of repeating

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myself, I wish to make more clear, to emphasize, my position in regard to organized play. I have no thought of relentless, changeless discipline; such ideas are farthest from my heart and mind. In my belief, through properly *organized* play we can get the nearest approach to *free* play. During my personal experience as director of play groups, I was never an autocrat; I tried to keep myself as much in the background as possible, and came to the fore only in cases of emergency, where a matter of justice had to be decided, or a new game had to be explained or taught, or perhaps new spirit had to be injected into the play. Otherwise, I tried merely to be a member of the group — just an older friend, an older playmate.

In the foregoing pages, I have tried briefly to outline the organization of the play room and in a general way to suggest something of its influence on the child. Some of the games used, each of which was selected with definite thought to its educational as well as pleasure-giving value, I shall discuss in my next chapter, entitled "Play Materials."

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Here is the daily program carried out in the play room. The hours were from 3:00 to 5:30 P.M. on school days, and from 9:30 to 12:00 A.M. and from 3:00 to 5:30 P.M. on Saturdays. (Mothers organizing a play group and having children below school age may, of course, arrange for a regular morning session.) It was understood that older children who had home duties and other demands on their time had the privilege of attending the play group on such days as they were free to do so. Nine-tenths of the children, however, attended the play group regularly. The program was roughly divided into three periods.

First, there was a free period with quiet games at tables or table occupations. The purpose of this period was, chiefly, to allow the children to relax and to adjust themselves to the standard of conduct in the play room. It was necessary for the children to learn to appreciate the important fact that indoor playing could not be as violent and as noisy as playing outdoors, that it must naturally be restricted; and it was the aim of this period to get the children, so to speak,

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in the right tune. This precaution helped to modulate the children's voices and helped prevent the formation of the disagreeable habit children are likely to get into of talking too loudly. The occupation during this period helped by its very nature to calm the children.

During this period I had my best opportunity to study the nature and special characteristics of every child, to learn the children's strengths, and to find out where they were weak and needed help. For instance, when I observed a child who could not handle the simplest game without dropping its parts a number of times, who handled his game clumsily, I realized that that child was lacking in muscular control and I saw to it that he played games which helped him in his needed development. If a child found it very difficult or almost impossible to thread a tapestry needle with wool, or could not make the simplest braid of raffia, I realized that that child was lacking in coördination and muscular control and I saw to it that he got the special play required by his deficiency. Such simple games as jack straws gave me

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the key to a child's sense of honor; in this game you miss when one straw barely moves another, and unless the children were very honorable they easily could take advantage of each other. Also in these quiet, free games I was able to detect the children who were lacking in concentration, one of the commonest faults in children due to neglected training, a fault which can be easily remedied through games. For instance, the child who would keep continually changing one game for another without playing it or even trying to find out how it was played, was helped to find a game particularly fitting to his needs, so that the playing of it would really be of interest to him and stimulate him to play with it for a considerable period. Thus I learned to know every child and learned how I best could serve him.

Second, came a period of free, active games, the purpose here being to give the children an outlet for their physical energy. Between the first and second period there was an intermission of a few minutes in which the children put away the quiet games they had been

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using; the older children folded the tables and put them on one side of the room, and the younger children placed the chairs on another side of the room, this to clear the floor for the active play. The play during this period was usually in ring formations, with and without singing, and consisted of rhythmic work, and various hopping and skipping and dancing games; also we had impromptu dramatic performances of stories we had read. All children, young and old, were admitted into these games, provided they involved no contests of physical strength. The purpose of admitting all was chiefly to put into practice ideas of democracy; the older children were given an opportunity, and were required, to be thoughtful of the younger ones, and were stimulated to find pleasure in giving pleasure to others, even though it meant sometimes sacrificing their own desires. This mixture of ages incidentally helped to keep these games from becoming too boisterous; in other words, it naturally kept the noise within the limits of what can be endured in indoor playing.



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The third, and last, was always a quiet period. It is highly desirable in all playing, whether at home or in a group away from home, that the latter part of the afternoon should not be spent in over-stimulating activity. The greatest effort should be made to have only such activity as will help quiet the children's nerves and relax their bodies, so that the children will not be too excited to eat and digest properly their evening meal and not too over-stimulated to fall into a restful sleep. For these reasons, this period was always given to story telling by myself or some other adult, occasionally illustrated with stereopticon views; or sometimes a story was told or retold by one of the children themselves. During these occasions the matter of good manners could incidentally be emphasized. Each child was required to sit quietly and listen quietly, whether he was interested in the story or not. Of course this demand was kept within reason, due consideration being given to the ages of the children. Whenever possible, the children were divided into two groups, the younger

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forming one story group, and all the others another. During this period the children's imagination was allowed to play freely; one opportunity of expressing itself the children had in illustrating the stories they heard. Pads and pencils were supplied them for that purpose.

A particular effort was made to end the afternoon in a harmonious spirit. After the story there usually was some quiet music, during which time the children in silence replaced everything that was out of place, took their wraps and hats and prepared for their departure. When all was in order and the children were ready, the music was changed into marching time and the children marched around the room once or twice, when I took my place at the door where I shook the hand of every child and wished him "Good-by" as he quietly walked out.

The outdoor play group in its general organization — that is, as to the parents' part in it, as to its membership, as to the children's share in its responsibilities — is the same as the indoor play group. And the

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same democratic, social spirit that governs and is behind play indoors should govern play out of doors. But because of the outdoor environment and the conditions that go with it, the program of activity is of necessity somewhat different.

First, I shall treat of how we met the distinct problems which outdoor playing created. A vacant lot, or a yard, can be made ideal for this kind of play; but we had no such blessing and had to play in a park. There are unavoidable disturbances and distractions which playing in a public place bring. This problem was more or less met by choosing an out-of-the-way corner in the park where there were no benches and where people were likely to pass less frequently than in other parts. After the first few days the curiosity of passersby waned and the group was left in peace. Every child was provided with a light, inexpensive camp stool which he brought to the park daily for use during such games and occupations as necessitated sitting down. Another problem which outdoor playing presented to us was the difficulty of carry-

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ing and caring for materials; also the lack of tables for using certain materials, and gusts of winds, created other problems. Because of these drawbacks, the occupation periods were planned to depend on very simple materials, such as could be used without any, or with very little, tools; raffia, shoe-strings, light cardboard, sketch books, pencils and crayons were the materials we chiefly used. Every child carried his own material in a light cardboard portmanteau hung on a light tape across his shoulder — which bag, by the way, every child made for himself.

The outdoor play group was divided into two or more sections, depending on the number of children present. Because of the more vigorous activities that playing in the open permitted, it was impractical and even dangerous to have groups of too varied ages play together. The program was divided roughly into three parts, and the nature of each part depended to a great extent upon the season of the year.

The first period was given entirely to free, active games where the children had all

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opportunity for physical exercise. The precaution, starting the children in a low key, that was necessary to observe in playing inside four walls was naturally not required in outdoor playing. On cold, fresh, crisp days the physical games were of course more vigorous than on humid and warm days. These games consisted usually of various ball games, bean bag games, jumping the rope, hop-scotch, running contests, puss-in-the-corner, fox and geese. The greatest effort was made to get out of these games the full physical, social and ethical value they held for the children. For instance, particular attention was always paid to observing the rules of the games; everyone's right was respected; and everyone shared equally in the games' pleasures, advantages and responsibilities.

The play in the second and third periods likewise varied according to the weather; and varied also according to the condition of the children after the first period. That is, if during the first period the children seemed to have used themselves up physically, the

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second period was planned to require less physical exertion. Perhaps it would be a period for occupation — for instance, braiding, weaving and sewing with raffia, which required concentration, more intelligent use of the children's power of observation, and more accurate use of the smaller muscles. If, on the other hand, the first period was not very strenuous the second period was devoted to social games, usually play in ring formations, and while there was a good deal of activity in these games the physical activity was much more restricted and the children had greater opportunity for self-expression and the use of the imagination.

The third period, the last, was always more or less a period of quiet, and the afternoon usually ended with a story.

Part of the program in connection with the play groups consisted in occasionally visiting places of interest, such as aquariums, museums, public libraries, zoölogical and botanical gardens. During these visits a particular effort was made not to over-burden or irritate the children by calling their attention to what

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they should observe. On the contrary, the children were left free to get as much out of these visits for themselves as possible; but when they asked questions or showed a particular interest in something, serious care was given to answering the questions intelligently and simply. These visits served the children in many ways: tested and developed their memory; aroused their curiosity; enriched their imagination; gave them a legitimate opportunity for constructive exercise of their emotions, which, for lack of proper use, are so often wasted in irritation and temper.

Much of what I have here said regarding details of organized play must be considered as merely suggestive, to be adapted by groups of mothers to their varying conditions. But the fundamentals are the same, whether the location be a small town with plenty of space or a crowded city, whether the parents be wealthy or of very limited means. The value to children and mothers of such organized play groups is beyond dispute; but I wish to say, in closing this chapter, that it

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must be remembered that the degree of success that will attend such a coöperative attempt will depend upon the harmony, knowledge and efficiency of the mothers' organization, upon the fitness for the purpose of the site chosen for play, and, most of all, upon the tact, spirit, and good judgment of the person selected as director.



## CHAPTER XI

### MATERIALS FOR PLAY

As I have already sought to emphasize, the important thing about play is the new attitude toward it; is the recognition of the invaluable opportunities play offers for the training and development of the child. Of only secondary importance is the material with which the child plays. We are going to have better play materials just as soon as parents recognize the need of such, and when the pleasure and development of the child becomes the first consideration in the manufacture of toys, instead of mere profit as at present is the case. But even now there is much excellent material easily within the reach of the modest income, or already existing in the average home. I hardly need say that the materials of foremost value are those that a child can "do things with."

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The chief thing is to use these commonplace materials with intelligence, to discover and apply their developing qualities to the budding faculties of the child.

Before going further into this subject, I wish to admit very frankly that much of the material which I shall mention will appear to many of my readers as the commonplaces of child life. The spirit in which they may be used is alone new. But in behalf of these commonplace and inexpensive materials I wish to say that, if they are used in the right spirit, they are better than the costly equipments which have been made a part of some educator's system, such as Madame Montessori's. In fact, I hold that the very limited and specialized use that can be made of much of the Montessori material, which is supposed to be its particular virtue, is often more of a drawback to the child than a benefit.

Even so simple and common a material as building blocks affords infinite possibilities. "We're going to visit a farm today," three little friends of mine were told; "let's see

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how much we can remember." On their return they occupied themselves for days with a game of their own planning, that of farmer. They assumed the parts of father farmer, mother farmer and child farmer, and first built for themselves a farm-house of the plain wooden blocks. The floor, instead of being carpeted, had a neat pattern of blue and white stars made from parquetry — a variety of blocks painted or stained a solid color in two or three sides, and each of the other sides painted in two colors, the surface divided parallelly to form quadrangles or diagonally to form triangles. Behind the house a garden was laid off. This was enclosed by a barb-wire fence, with blocks as posts across whose tops ran a thin picture wire held in place by carpet tacks hammered in by the children. Beyond the garden was a stable, with stalls for the horses and the cows. And around this heart of the farm fields were laid off. After this structural work was done, the children proceeded to imitate various farming processes they had observed.

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This simple material had for these children a constant interest because it had become to them a means of self-expression. It developed their observation, imagination, manual dexterity — and, in this particular instance, fixed in their minds in a most pleasurable way some of the prominent details of farming.

Plasticene, or modelling clay, is one of the most responsive materials to the child's steadily growing imagination and observation; it holds constant surprises for him, and its possibilities increase with a child's development. A child of two can, with his own tiny palms, in less than a minute, make a real ball; by putting his thumb in that ball and pressing it slightly against a table, he has a bowl very much like his porridge bowl; by turning the bowl upside down and flattening its edges a bit, he has a hat. And so he can go on, daily finding new revelations in this material.

I have had children of three model cups, saucers, spoons, forks, knives baskets, bird's-nests with eggs, various pieces of furniture, and even members of their immediate family.

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In working with plastic materials, or any constructive materials, the child should be given the fullest possible freedom; only by allowing freedom can one ascertain to what extent the child uses his own eyes, his own judgment, and expresses himself. No matter how crude or shapeless, from the adult's point of view, the child's interpretation of an object may be, the adult should recognize the child's effort with all seriousness. A correction should never be made by merely improving upon the child's work. An effort should be made to have the child discover his own mistake. If, for instance, he makes a table with three legs, which should have four, ask the child to look at a table and count the legs. If the child makes a hand with four fingers, ask him to count the fingers on his hand. He sees his mistake, makes his own correction, and his power of observation is thereby sharpened.

One of the most pleasure-giving, useful and satisfactory occupations I know for small fingers is for the child to make his own plastic material. Besides having the interest to the child of making the entire thing himself, this

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home-made material is inexpensive, gives the child opportunity to use his imagination, to choose his own color, and calls into action many of the child's faculties which the prepared clay does not offer. The following is the recipe for this home-made plastic material: Take two tablespoonfuls cornstarch, four tablespoonfuls salt, four tablespoonfuls boiling water; for larger quantity use materials in same proportion; color with blueing, red ink or color from the child's water-color box. Mix cornstarch and salt in a small cooking pot. Pour on the colored boiling water and stir quickly until mixture is soft. Place on fire and stir until mixture forms a soft ball. Take off and knead with the hands for ten minutes. If material crumbles, pour on a little hot water; if it sticks to hands, dust the hands with cornstarch. This clay may be used for modelling all kinds of articles. These articles will keep their shape permanently, unless broken, for the material dries and becomes very hard. An especially attractive use of this material is to make it into beads. This is done by rolling balls and piercing

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them with a pin (one pin may be used for several beads). When dry and the pin is removed there is a small hole for stringing. To keep this clay in plastic condition it should be wrapped in wax paper.

If accidents do happen through the misuse of materials, it is because the child has not been taught their proper use. It is almost an accepted fact among adults that children prefer misusing objects that come into their hands. One day I went in with a little girl to a stationery shop and bought for her some paper and a blue pencil, which was sharpened. As a mere matter of course I handed both articles to the child — whereupon the proprietor of the store, a fatherly man, cried out warningly :

“Don’t give the pencil to the baby ! She’ll put it in her mouth !”

As if in protest against the shopkeeper’s under-estimate of her, the three-and-a-half year old child laid her pad on a stool near the counter, and quickly drew a blue house, windows, doors, stoop, chimney, smoke and all, and handed it to him.

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Paper and pencil may be combined with story telling for the development of the child's imagination, observation, and manual dexterity. Some of the pleasantest experiences I have had with small groups of little children have consisted in telling them stories, and then asking them to write the story out for me in pictures. For good results the stories must, first of all, be short and very simple, they must have but few characters, and the action of the story must be direct and familiar to the child. A long story like "Alice in Wonderland" can be told in instalments. At the beginning of each new instalment the child can be asked to tell in pictures what came before it. I have had astonishingly good results with Browning's "Pied Piper," with "The Fisherman and his Wife," and with "Alice in Wonderland."

A pair of scissors with blunt ends can be used safely by a child at the age of two and a half. From this age on a child will find great interest and pleasure in cutting pictures out of magazines. A large scrap book can be easily made of one large sheet of manilla



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wrapping paper folded several times and sewed in the middle. A tube or pot of paste, and the child is provided with a very useful and very interesting occupation. An even better thing is to let the child draw his own pictures, color them, then if he so wishes let him cut them out and paste them in his book.

Raffia, material familiar to everybody, and obtainable in many colors, can provide innumerable occupations for children. Perhaps the first thing they can do with raffia is to make braids, then sew the braids into napkin rings, small mats and baskets. In starting to work with any new material the first lesson should be very brief, so that the child will not get tired and discouraged. As soon as possible the child should make a complete thing — this encourages him; for instance, as soon as he learns to braid he can by sewing two ends of a five-inch braid together make a napkin ring. As the child gains mastery over his fingers and the material, the occupation can be made more complex.

Reed can be used in connection with raffia and by itself. There are so many excellent,

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simple books on weaving with raffia and reed, and I can give so little space to it here, that I can do no better than advise those who are interested in such work to look into these books.

Colored shoe-strings, or colored string of any kind, can be used in connection with cardboard or heavy paper in various ways. One useful and suggestive thing the child can make is a portfolio large enough for the child's drawing pad and crayon or other play material. Cut a sheet of ordinary heavy manilla paper to the size desired — say twelve inches by twenty-four inches; fold it a trifle below the middle; fold the longer side down over the shorter side to make a flap; perforate the sides with holes one-inch apart (if a puncher is at hand the holes can be made with that — a medium sized nail makes good enough holes for the purpose). Make a knot at one end, and using the tip for a needle sew each side up, using the overcast stitch and beginning from the bottom. When the two sides are thus sewed up, the ends of the string may be tied together, so that when slipped over the

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head the child can wear the portfolio as a letter-carrier wears his pouch.

A bit of cardboard and a round wooden tooth-pick can be made into a top by very little children. Cut out a disc of cardboard, not more than two inches in diameter. Color both sides of the disc with crayon or water color, then pierce the centre with a toothpick, and the top is complete. If the child desires he may divide the disc into sections with his pencil and paint each section a different color; the whirling top will then give him some idea of color combination.

There are many simple and pleasurable employments that develop the child's concentration, perseverance, and especially give him repose. Of these the stringing of beads of various colors is a typical example. The child who has been trained to dress and undress himself has already acquired sufficient control of his hands and mental coördination to enable him to master quickly the stringing of the individual bead. This occupation can be made a source of pleasurable interest by giving to it a concrete purpose.

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"Let's make a string of blue beads for Bessie," I said to a little girl — "a string long enough to go around her neck twice."

She began with delight, eager to see how her doll would look in the beads. Her problem was sufficiently complicated to give the business a still further interest, for the box of beads was of six colors and of three sizes; she had to select only the blue beads of one size. On another day she made a string of red beads for Olga, who was a brunette. Soon of her own initiative, she began in her stringing of beads to make various orderly combinations of colors, two whites, two browns, two greens, and then a repetition of this scheme. And while she was doing a thing that she enjoyed immensely, her concentration was being developed, her hand was becoming deft, her eyes were being trained as to size and color.

Incidentally, the time spent in stringing beads, cutting out pictures, the weaving of vari-colored paper mats, threading a needle and sewing on buttons can be made a period of rest for both child and mother. Also the child will begin to get training in the desirable

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habit of playing by himself for a period daily. Such occupations, after the child has once got a start, he can pursue alone. Though the child has broken the habit of his daily nap, which some children do as early as three, he should at least have a period of physical quietness. The child should be prepared just as if he were really going to sleep and be put into his crib, and be supplied with interesting materials. The child that has been properly handled will be quietly happy for an hour or two, and will gain, and give, much needed repose.

Such a material as "nested blocks," whose particular quality is that of training the eyes in regard to relative size, automatically calls the attention to the mistakes the little child may make, and compels their correction. In building a tower, say with a set of six pieces, the child must use the largest as a base and use the others in the order of their decreasing size. If he places number 4 upon number 6, then when the tower is completed he has no place for number 5; or if he is putting the blocks back into each other and puts num-

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ber 4 into number 6, he again lacks a place for number 5. He is compelled to compare the sizes of the blocks, rebuild or reneat, until he discovers his error.

Such a game develops at least the germ of the habit of putting things in the recognized place in which they belong, and that habit can be developed and extended to other activities — to the closing of doors and drawers, the putting on of covers, and the putting away of games that fit exactly into their boxes. The very putting away of games by the child himself can be made a most attractive part of play, and incidentally can be made to implant habits of orderliness and self-dependence.

There are innumerable occupations and errands about the house which would satisfy in a constructive way the little child's desire for activity and which can truly be regarded as materials of play since they bring pleasure and fun into the child's life. Children take particular delight in doing *real* things. Mothers are frequently annoyed and hindered in their household work by their children always

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being in their way, giving them no peace. Such a situation can easily be remedied by enlisting the child's assistance; almost any task can be presented in the light of a game, a privilege, if only the mother will use tact. For instance, while the mother is washing the dishes the little child can be asked to put away the silver, to arrange the spoons, knives and forks in their respective places; he should be shown how to do this correctly and be expected to do it so. The child can be made to feel a radiant pride if he be praised when his work is well done, and he will be given a live desire to do this same thing again and maintain his reputation. Thus a delightful occupation will be provided for restless hands and feet, the mother will be saved from annoyance, the little child will be kept out of mischief and incidentally he will have received one of the best lessons in order, in helpfulness and possibly in counting. Little children can be trusted to wipe the smaller dishes and put them in their places. They can learn to set a table, at least to lay out the silver, put on the tumblers, salt cellars and napkins — in

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fact, this can be made, at least once a day, one of the child's pleasurable duties. A little child can even give aid in the preparation of a meal, such as helping to prepare certain vegetables, like the shelling of peas, peeling apples and stemming strawberries. Many a step and minute can be saved the mother, and pleasure and real training provided for a little child, by asking him to pick up certain things about the house, replace shoes, books, magazines — always presenting such things, remember, in the light of a privilege, an honor, not as a hard duty which he must perform or suffer a penalty.

In my experience, afternoons that might have been dreary and irritating to both the child and parent, were turned into afternoons of sunshine and pleasure to both by allowing the children in the house to go through the process of real laundering. There is no reason why a little child should not be allowed a corner in the kitchen, if convenient, or in the bathroom if it is light and airy, where if the child would either have its own little wash-tub (which practically every child possesses)



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or an ordinary small basin, with lukewarm water, the child could wash ribbons, socks and other small articles. The child should then be allowed to hang the wash on a line, and then to go through the process of ironing with its small iron. Days that the weather compels the children to remain indoors might be devoted in part to simple carpentry. The child can easily be supplied with a few necessary tools not too large for him to handle, a small saw, hammer, some nails and a few pieces of wood, out of which he can create objects to suit his own imagination and fancy. It will be found that children can learn to be careful of their own hands and fingers when using tools if they are entrusted with responsibility. It is through practice that one learns to be careful, much more than through admonition or prohibition.

The average child is more intelligent than we are accustomed to believe, and much more able to do things. The parents must exercise great care to put in the child's way games and play-things commensurate with his powers. It must be remembered that a child outgrows

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games just as he outgrows clothes, and just as he is given new clothes to fit his larger body, so should he be given new games to fit and further develop his increased powers. Furthermore, the games should be varied; the child should not be kept at one game after he has become wearied of it, for then the educational value of that game is lost.

The same games, particularly games that are played alone, do not appeal alike to all children. Here of course the parent must exercise observation and judgment. The parent must note what kinds of play most interest the child, what best draw out his personality, and supply materials accordingly. I will here add that free play, in which the child is allowed to choose his own games and materials, and use them as he will, is one of the best agents in the world for bringing out the child's natural bent, his personality, the quality that differentiates him from other children: and it is one of the greatest aids in wisely developing the child's personality during his early years.

What has been here written about materials

## MATERIALS FOR PLAY

has been necessarily brief; suggestive rather than exhaustive. But that is as well, for — here I repeat once more — I do not wish to place emphasis on material, but *on the idea*. And the idea behind all these materials is the same: to appreciate the tremendous value of the play instinct of the child; to realize the child's faculties — to put in the child's hands materials that will prompt the pleasurable self-exercise and development of those faculties. That idea grasped, the mother has, or is in the way of getting, *the new vision of play*; she is fitted for the lesser problem of providing her own list of materials.

## CHAPTER XII

### YOUR CHILDREN'S CLOTHES

IN preceding chapters I have referred incidentally to the dressing of your child. What the child shall wear is a matter that, in most of its phases, lies outside the scope of this book; but there are several points that bear directly upon the child's development and upon the fitness of the mother to give adequate attention to her child's mind and spirit and character. Upon some of these points I wish to make comments which, though not intended to be exhaustive, may prove suggestive to the reader.

"Before you go you must see my baby's layette," a young mother urged me, and led me to a big bureau in her room. "Don't you think this is lovely?" she beamed as she held up for my inspection a bib of the sheerest lawn exquisitely embroidered with a wreath

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of the tiniest roses. "I have three of these and three slips and a hood to match." And excitedly she went on and laid out upon the bed a marvellous array of infant's apparel, all hand-sewed, feather-stitched, scalloped and embroidered; and then pointing to them all she exclaimed, glowing with pride and expectant of praise: "I made every stitch of these with my own fingers!"

As I looked upon this very pale mother and remembered the sickly looking baby in that gorgeously bedecked bassinet in the adjoining room, her words translated themselves into a confession something like this: "I nearly killed myself and my child with my own fingers." That naïve, exultant exclamation was just another bit of testimony to the frightful waste of life that goes in the preparation and the making of children's clothes — a human sacrifice that is performed in all sincerity, and in the name of mother love — a sacrifice that is unthinkingly accepted as the ideal of maternal duty and devotion by the average young mother.

If only part of the time and love and labor

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that are spent on the expected child's clothes were spent in finding out what it is that the little child really requires for his best development, it would be found that, first, he needs a mother, in sound physical condition, fresh and strong of spirit, interested in the important things of life which enrich one's sympathies and broaden one's understanding; and not a mother worn physically and nervously and exhausted spiritually by giving the best of her time and energies to endless sewing. And second, it would be found that as to the infant's clothes, what the little child needs for his best interest are comparatively few garments, and these of the simplest possible character.

The foremost thought about these clothes should be absolute comfort. They should be big enough for the child to grow in, but not long, trailing, beruffled and belaced garments — clothes that would easily slip on and off so that the child would require as little handling and fussing over as possible. When it is remembered that the first year of the child's existence is spent chiefly in sleep or

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rest upon his side or back, and that this quiet and repose help build the foundation on which the child's future health depends, it should be at once apparent how important it is to avoid every unnecessary bit of clothing, every ruffle, every piece of lace or bit of embroidery that might possibly crumple or bunch or turn up and thus disturb the child's peace. Mothers little dream how much annoyance over the child's condition might be avoided if only they would reduce their babies' clothes to one half of what they now use. "I don't know what can be wrong with my baby today, it cries and cries and there seems to be nothing the matter with it." The very distracted mother who said this did everything she thought of to try to appease her child. She gave him various toys, she tried a drink of water, an extra feeding, she held him and walked with him. But what that little baby needed was to have part of his clothing removed. This done, he was perfectly happy again.

And then, the precious time and nervous energy that are wasted on merely looking after

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these blood-made garments! "You can not trust anybody with the doing up of these fine things," a young mother told me when I found her one afternoon ironing with great care the baby's frills when she should have been lying down, resting and recreating for her baby's next feeding. And yet this mother wondered why it was that she often did not have enough milk to nurse her baby, that her baby suffered from indigestion, and that it was restless and irritable and cried a great deal more than seemed normal.

"But babies look so cunning in pretty things," one of these clothes-devoted mothers pleaded with me. I agree that the clothes perhaps look cunning, but I certainly deny that the babies do in them, unless, indeed, a superhuman amount of time and attention is given to keep these clothes always in perfect condition. The reason is simple enough. Fine, trimmed garments wrinkle and muss and are soiled much more easily than simple ones, and certainly a child's looks can not be improved by soiled and untidy clothes no matter how superior their quality and decoration.



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But the problem of proper clothing does not stop with the helpless infant; and the influence of clothing is not limited to the child's comfort and the mother's convenience. A child's clothing is a factor of very great importance in the development of his body and character. At the seashore a mother complained to me of her four-year-old boy, "Johnnie can not keep his clothes clean for five minutes." In the course of that very morning this mother had changed four pairs of socks and as many pairs of shoes and two sailor suits, and when he reappeared after the final change he was streaked with mud and dripping wet.

I watched this child at play, and though I saw the truth of the mother's complaint my sympathies were decidedly with the boy, because the person at fault was not the child but the mother. All that morning the boy was harassed and suppressed, as he probably had been from his earliest childhood, by such phrases as, "Don't, Johnnie, you will get your clothes dirty," "You will tear your clothes," "Be careful of your

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clothes." This mother, like so many thousands of others, had been so engrossed since his birth in keeping the child's clothes just so that she had neither time nor thought to realize the frightful cost her child was paying for her ambition. Here was a child whose development was in a large degree being sacrificed for the sake of his clothes. He had never been given a chance to play freely, to exercise freely, to learn to do things by the actual doing of them; and therefore he naturally had never gained control over his muscles and had never learned the proper use of his hands and feet. He was flabby and clumsy, he stumbled over everything, he could hardly throw a pebble into the water without falling into it, he could not scramble over a rock without scratching himself. This child, though apparently well and strong enough, and bright enough, was practically helpless physically, and by this lack of muscular coördination his mentality and spirit were affected. He was restless, irritable, had no power of concentration in his play, had no initiative, and being continuously

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interrupted and disturbed by his mother he had acquired the habit of continuously disturbing and interrupting others. He was another typical example of the sacrifice of childhood upon the altar of "your children's clothes."

Children's clothes are indeed important; they deserve thought and care; but the thought and time given to them should be spent on how to make clothes best serve the child, not hinder him. There should be as few articles of clothing as possible on the child. A suit of underwear; a waist on which the garters are fastened; a pair of stockings and a pair of shoes; an outside garment — these are enough for everyday use. The underwear must never be too heavy, even in the coldest days in winter. It must be remembered that a child is always very active, and when he is indoors he is likely to suffer great discomfort from too much underclothing, which can not easily be removed. The extra garments for outdoor wear should be adjustable to the variations of the weather; that is, if it is very cold,

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the child may wear a sweater under his overcoat; or, if it is only moderately cold, he may wear either the coat or sweater. This method of dressing the child will add much to his comfort and make little trouble to the mother.

Too much care can not be given to the matter of seeing that our children's garments are always comfortable, that they fit properly. Too loose garments are as bad for the child as too tight. Many irritating habits, such as squirming, raising of the shoulders, twisting of the neck — habits which are often mistaken for nervousness in the child, and which are a source of annoyance and worry to parents — can in many instances be traced to the child's ill-fitting clothes.

There is no excuse these days for having either ill-fitting and ugly, or over-elaborate and unnecessarily dainty, clothing for children. Our shops are filled with simple, splendidly made clothes for children, if only mothers would have the good sense and good taste to choose the right things. And I wish to say here that the price for simple,

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ready-made clothes, however large it may seem in comparison to the cost of the same clothes if made at home, is in reality very modest — for the mother who considers the shop prices exorbitant is thinking only of *the cost of the material*, and is not counting in her own time and labor. The making of clothes at home takes so much of the mother's valuable time, patience, spirit and mind, for which there are so many more vital demands, that almost any price paid for ready-made clothes is cheap in comparison. In this connection I wish to say that three garments of good material, well-made, which will stand frequent washing and steady wear, are worth half a dozen or more that can be obtained for the same amount.

One of the most important items of a child's wardrobe, and perhaps the one that receives least of thoughtful consideration, is the children's shoes. Most of the foot trouble that develops in later years, except such as is caused by accident, can be traced back to the bad shoes of childhood. Frequently the shoes are too short, which cramps

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the child's toes and puts the entire foot out of shape. Too much attention can not be given to keep the foot in its natural, normal condition; a well-shaped foot which gives its owner no trouble is all too rare these days. There are plenty of the right sort of shoes made for children; here again it is up to the mother to use her good sense in buying. But with shoes, as with the other articles of clothes which *show*, mothers are often likely to think of the looks rather than of comfort and usefulness. The greatest extravagance is to buy cheap shoes. They quickly get out of shape because the leather, which is of the poorest quality, is easily affected by dampness, heat and cold, and the natural strain upon them; and in their misshapen state they deform the little foot. In the matter of cold dollars and cents, in the end these cheap shoes cost at least as much as the most expensive. One good pair will usually last as long as two or three cheap pair.

The garment that takes most of the mother's time and thought is usually the child's dress or suit. There is no reason why girls as well

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as boys, up to at least the age of six, should not be dressed in rompers. These serviceable garments, if made with care on straight simple lines, of washable materials, in fast solid colors instead of mixed, suited to the complexion of the individual child, should be just as beautiful as any fussy, fancy or stylish garment that the home needle or the shops can produce. Such clothes, in the first place, give the child absolute freedom in his movements, give the child's growing body a chance to grow; and further, they are inexpensive enough to cause little worry to the mother in case they do tear. They really protect the child's body by keeping his underwear clean from unnecessary dirt, and they are easily done up when soiled.

Such simplicity of dress as I have indicated has many valuable points in the child's training. This simplicity would make the child less conscious of himself by not continuously calling attention to his clothes; it would make it easy to teach the child to dress himself and help take care of his cloth-

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ing; and it would give the child a better chance to develop the strength and grace of his body — and surely the perfect form of a child is far more beautiful and wonderful than any piece of decorated cloth can make it. And it would save numberless hours to the mother, who instead of spending her time in making impediments for her child could use that time in improving her own mind and individuality, so that she might be better able to understand and administer to the deeper needs of her children.



## CHAPTER XIII

### FATHERS AND CHILDREN

I WISH to say at the beginning of this chapter, as I said at the beginning of the chapter on clothes, that I do not intend this chapter to be exhaustive. The coöperation of the father in the training of the child: here is a subject worthy of being a book in itself; again I can hope to do no more than be suggestive — to hint what the father's part may be and how he can be influenced to live that part.

Wives and mothers naturally hesitate to criticise the fathers of their children; but when they are frank with themselves they must admit that their husbands (the average ones, at least) leave upon them almost the entire responsibility of the guidance and development of their children during their early years. And they must recognize that

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this traditional shirking of responsibility by fathers means not only too great a task for the mothers, but means a distinct loss to the child. The young child needs the father's influence as well as the mother's; it needs the stimulus, guidance, nurture of the qualities that proceed from a sympathetic masculine nature.

The tendency is for the father to accept the first years of the child's existence as a matter of course. This is not due to his lack of love for either child or mother; it is just following a conventional, ingrained idea that it is up to the mother to rear the children. To be sure, the father is concerned in the child's physical well-being; in case of accident or sickness he is ready to serve or do whatever he can. But outside of this the average father is not likely to give the child thoughtful personal consideration until at the age of five or six the child begins to assert himself as an officious, self-centered, uncontrollable youngster.

Then, when the child becomes a nuisance, the father's irritation or pride is aroused and

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too often he is ready to administer punishment for the child's faults and weaknesses regardless of their origin. And mothers are inclined toward helping the father assume and become fixed in this attitude. How often we hear the threat, "John, if you don't stop doing that, I'll tell father!" or "Just wait until father comes!" Too frequently "father" in the average household represents to the little child someone to be afraid of, someone who punishes—in a word, the policeman in the family. And to secure obedience through punishment or fear of punishment—that has become one of the chief functions of fatherhood.

"One evening," a father told me while we were discussing child-training, "I came home and found my little boy in the midst of a scene with his mother. The child violently protested against going to bed, whereupon I picked up the lad, took him to the bathroom and with the help of a very soft bathroom slipper performed the unmentionable rites. It did the work," the father proudly assured me. "There is never

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any disobedience when the boy knows that I am around."

"Did you know why the boy was in a temper, why he rebelled against going to bed before you punished him?" I asked.

"Oh, that has nothing to do with the case," he promptly asserted. "What the boy needed was a lesson in obedience; he had it all right, and he hasn't forgotten it!"

In the weeks that followed I made a special effort to study both the father and son, and I found that the child in reality had not the slightest idea of obedience. To be sure, he obeyed his father, but he did it in a blind, loveless, fearful kind of a way, as if the ghost of that strong, angry father with the bathroom slipper was always haunting him. The thing that impressed me most was the pitifully barren and strained relationship between the father and boy.

Too frequently the attitude of the unthinking father is to reprimand or suppress the child, without giving a thought to the possible cause of the child's irritating fault, or a thought to its possible cure. One day

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at the dinner table of a hotel, at a safe distance from the beach, a small boy began to boast that he was not afraid to walk into the cold water clear up to his neck; whereupon his father interrupted sharply with:

"Now, you keep quiet, John; you know you are a coward. Don't say that again."

To be sure, this boy was a coward, and the father was perhaps justly displeased; but by squelching the boy he certainly did very little to help the boy overcome his cowardice. In the first place, the father did not realize that perhaps the boy was not born a coward but probably made one through needless suppression, through meaningless "don'ts." What the boy needed now was a stimulus which would encourage him to meet physically that which he only dared face in his imagination; what he needed was sympathy and kindness, and not rebuffs.

"I am glad to hear you are not afraid of the cold water, John," is what his father should have answered him; and the next time the father and boy were at the beach together the father might easily have re-

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called the child's boast and asked him to show that he was not afraid of the water. Such an attitude on the father's part would have resulted in one of two things: the boy, thus quietly put to the test, would either have summed up sufficient courage really to go in, or he would have realized in his father's presence that he could not do it and would have had a lesson tending to help cure his boastfulness.

Now, the effort of the father — and in this the mother should help him — should be to establish a thorough bond of sympathy with his children; he should try to understand the child, take an interest in the child's interest, be a real friend. Doubtless fathers will claim that their time is spent in providing for the children's needs, and that they have none left for personal attention. But the excuse is not sufficient. Fathers must realize, as well as mothers, that the first five years of the child's life are the most important in the child's development. It is then that he is most formative, most impressionable; it is then that he needs most serious

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and careful thought from both parents; and if the child is properly handled through this period of his existence, half the battles of the future man in the child are won.

Nothing will so quickly draw a father and child together, and give the father an insight into the child's character, as active participation in the child's work or play. "I never appreciated my little daughter until one day we built a kite together," a father told me. This working together established a mutual interest, an understanding, a sympathy between the two that did not exist before. Until then the father had been a kind of everyday Santa Claus. He brought the girl daily a game, a toy, or some sweets — but the bond these things established between them was almost as unsubstantial as the crank of the mechanical toy or the candy in her mouth. Since this new relationship has sprung up, the little girl looks forward to her father's coming as the event of the day. She always has something of importance to herself to tell him; she is stimulated to make surprises for him

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— a bit of clay modelling, a drawing, a piece of sewing, or a house of blocks. This little girl's life was enriched and broadened by finding in her father a friend, and his life was enriched and broadened by coming in direct contact with the unfolding years of his little child, by this exercise of the complete function of a father.

With the employment of a little consideration the father can maintain such a relationship even when hard pressed by affairs, and even when away from home. I know a father whose work necessitates his travelling from city to city, who every day mails each of his two children a picture postcard of some scene, object, animal or person that he knows will catch their interest; and on each card is always some comment and word of remembrance. When this father comes home from one of his long trips there are no broken threads to be picked up. Every day the children have felt him near them; have felt a sense of comradeship. As he is truly a wise and loving father, and as they have come to realize that he is striv-



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ing to do what is best for them, there is rarely any misunderstanding or friction among them when he has occasion to make a request.

No, it is not wholly a question of the father's lack of time; it is largely a matter of attitude. If the amount of time (plus a little more, for almost every father can spare it) that is spent in merely fooling with the child as a plaything, in teasing, suppressing, punishing — if this time were given to establish a loving constructive relationship, and if a real effort were made to understand the child, then the father would become far more valuable as a father, the child would have a fuller chance for a complete and rounded development, and much of the petty irritation that arises among husbands and wives and their children would be eliminated by this new spirit of coöperation in the home.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SOME SUGGESTIVE CASES

I AM stating a very ancient truth when I say that education would be vastly simplified if children were only all alike. As a matter of regrettable fact, much of our present-day education is conducted upon the assumption that each child is an exact duplicate of every other child — like a popular motor car, with every part standardized, and renewable by a postcard mailed to the factory; and whenever trouble arises with the child, it is the child who is blamed for not fitting accurately and smoothly into the method, and not the method blamed for failing to fit the child.

Yes, if children were all alike child training would be paradisisally easy — but what a stupid lot our race would be! As a piece of mechanism a Ford may be desirable and very praiseworthy, but we should give thanks

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that our children are not all little Fords. As I have repeatedly said before, and can not say too often, the hope of the human race, and the hope of the individual child, lies in the fact that each child is different. The good in such variation from the average must be sought for, preserved, developed. And whenever trouble arises with the child, his nature, his personality, his variation from any standardized human pattern, should be studied and understood before we begin any tinkering with his inner works to make him a perfect and smooth-running bit of machinery.

I am here presenting a few cases from my own professional records — cases in which the faults, problems, and virtues are more or less typical; and am presenting them with the idea that they may prove suggestive to mothers how to proceed *to learn who their children are*, and having learned this, how to proceed to correct the faults and how to proceed to develop the children to their highest possibilities. I must emphasize that these cases are only suggestive; no

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recipe or group of recipes can be given that will be universal and infallible; it must be left to the mother's intelligence, patience, and affection to develop, alter and apply these suggestions to individual difficulties — and better still, out of her study of her child to invent new methods which will fit her particular situation. It so happens that in all the cases here cited the parents were above the average in economic circumstances, but I believe the mother of more limited means can adapt the ideas and suggestions so that they will be useful in her problems. I hardly need say that the names in the following cases are fictitious and that the identity of each child is concealed; but all the details are facts.

### I. A DESTRUCTIVE CHILD

*History.* Milton is eight years old; of well-to-do parents; oldest of two children; younger brother, Billy, is five. Both children have every physical comfort and all the recreation and amusement they can

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desire. Both are in charge of a nursery governess of the average type, who is most particular about children's clothes and conventional manners, but who has no conception of the nature and character of the two children.

Milton was continually finding himself in trouble in his school; the teacher complained of his inattention, restlessness, slyness, lack of concentration, carelessness, loudness; she admitted though that he was bright enough and quick enough to learn when he so desired. At home Milton was disobedient, spiteful, irritable, mannerless, and at every opportunity tormented and teased his younger brother. The mother was in despair over the boy.

*Diagnosis.* After an intimate study of Milton in school and in his own home, observing him at play, at his meals and in his relationship with the members of his household, I made the following diagnosis:

First. Milton was in excellent physical condition; a child of more than ordinary physical strength and will power; of good

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mind, originality, imagination, initiative — all qualities and gifts which promised the making of a forceful and extremely useful adult. These natural qualities and impulses were not understood or appreciated, and were not given an opportunity for normal, wholesome development by his parents and others who directly influenced his life. In consequence, his originally splendid qualities degenerated, through mishandling, into destructive actions and extremely repulsive and humiliating habits.

Second. Milton's inability to concentrate, which expressed itself in restlessness, impatience, inattention, carelessness, was the direct result of the only too common disorganized, thoughtless handling the little child receives up to and even after the age of six. This is the period during which the common idea is that the child is chiefly to be amused or diverted; when his activities depend principally on the convenience or whim of parents or nurse; when the child, as a rule, is neither provided with proper material for his activities, nor is he helped

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or allowed to continue *his* activities to a successful end, but instead is thoughtlessly and needlessly interrupted and distracted from them. Milton was a victim, and much of his complained-of behavior was the consequence, of just this treatment.

Third. Milton's disobedience was the result: (a) of lack of physical and mental coördination; (b) of unreasonable and thoughtless demands made upon him by his parents; (c) of lack of simplicity and directness in the commands given him; (d) lack of thoughtful, loving discipline.

Fourth. Milton's slyness, spitefulness, irritation, were (a) the reaction of thoughtless suppression, (b) lack of opportunity for vigorous exercise, for constructive, original, forceful activity.

Fifth. Milton's desire to bully and tease his little brother had several causes: (a) Milton was doubtless reflecting the treatment *he* received from elders; (b) the younger brother, inferior in physical and mental strength, served as a target for the older brother's unused powers; (c) the little

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brother's dependence for leadership, play and amusement upon the elder.

*Recommendations.* First. To have Milton taken out of the private school he attended, which I found, from personal observation, *wickedly* inadequate not only for Milton but for any normal healthy child. The chief aim of this school, as of so many schools, seemed to be to suppress relentlessly every possible instinct which indicates self-expression on the part of the child, to kill his personality and all possible initiative in him. The school was rigid in its discipline, but the emphasis was laid almost wholly on superficial conventions and forms in etiquette, which stimulate hypocrisy and tend to destroy the simplicity and spontaneity of the child's nature. The atmosphere was absolutely hard and uninspired.

Second. I recommended the dismissal of the nursery governess, who laid all emphasis on the child's clothes and superficial manners, and, like the average nurse, acted chiefly as a private policeman to the child, but had no idea of the child's nature and needs. I



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recommended that a young woman of intelligence and sympathy be substituted in her place, who would carry out a program of interesting and developing play arranged by me. This program would consist of games organized to be played chiefly in groups, and would aim to stimulate in the child mental as well as muscular discipline, and would aim to establish between the child and the other players a democratic social relationship. (See chapters on Play.)

Third. An entire reorganization of the nursery. All superfluous and meaningless mechanical toys to be removed, and only such material and games to be used as would directly help the child to develop him on the sides where he was weak. I introduced carpentry tools, crayon, paper, scissors and various materials and games which would stimulate careful and precise use of the hands. I ordered that there should be a place for these materials and toys within the reach of the child; that each toy should be kept in perfect order, and be kept in its place, and that it should be looked after by

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*the child himself*; that the child should be stimulated to do everything for himself, as far as he was able, bathe, dress and keep his personal belongings in order, and that this be required of the child regardless of how much time it should take him in the beginning — it being understood, of course, that all these things are to be done in such a manner as will not make them an invasion of the rights of the child. (Note: Ordinarily adults do not allow sufficient time for a little child's tiny hands; we are impatient for results and we are therefore likely to do many things for our children, which they should be encouraged to do for themselves.)

Fourth. Though my interest was chiefly in Milton, I could not but observe the younger brother, Billy, since the two naturally influenced each other. I recommended that a systematic method of training be commenced with the little brother, this for the little boy's sake as much as for his brother. If Billy at his present age should be taught to depend upon himself, should be given an opportunity to express himself, to use his

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hands accurately and to acquire the habit of concentration, he will, without doubt, avoid Milton's difficulties, and will furthermore stimulate a greater interest in Milton to follow his new method of play.

Fifth. That once a week the children should be taken to some place of interest — museum, public library, aquarium, the woods, the docks where they might see ships passing — any place that would stir the childish imagination. Such visits should not be made a strain upon the child; no special preparations in regard to clothes or of any other sort should be made; so that the child will take the visit as naturally as his ordinary play period. During the visits no aggressive effort should be made to teach or give any instructions. The child's mind should be allowed to take in what it can; the rest should be let alone. If, however, the child should ask a question or ask for an explanation — good! The greatest effort should be made to answer his question as simply, as directly and as nearly within the child's comprehension as possible.

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Sixth. I recommended that the general home relationship toward the child should be more thoughtful and less wordy. The child should always be spoken to in an even temper; words addressed in anger or lacking in self-control, directions given loudly, passionately, do not make the desired impression, and what is worse, cause an ugly spiritual and physical reaction in the child. Directions, requests and corrections should be given in as few words and as clearly as possible.

### 2. A SHY AND SENSITIVE CHILD

*History.* Henry is ten; the oldest of two children; his sister is eight. Of intellectual, highly-excitabile parents; mother very ambitious for her children, eager to have them accomplished socially, musically, in languages and fine arts. His mother complained that Henry was very unsociable, nervous, irritable, listless; that he had no particular interest in anything; that he was thoughtless, even cruel, to his younger sister.

*Diagnosis.* After studying Henry for some time I found the boy to be naturally very

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shy — a very sensitive and most delicately organized child, who instinctively shrunk from new people and new (unknown to him) experiences. He was very keen mentally, very quick to see and understand, but very slow in letting others know what he knew. He was very slow and backward in expressing himself, either in action or in words.

Through lack of a sympathetic understanding of his nature, his shyness and sensitiveness, his silence and inexpressiveness were mistaken, especially by his mother, for wilful unfriendliness, for stubbornness. He was constantly being forced and pressed into doing that which was naturally against his very nature to do. The result was that this pressure irritated him, and in consequence he became even less willing to do things which his mother asked of him, shrank even more from people and retired more within himself. The more he was urged and forced, the greater and more violent were his reactions. And since the mother understood him least of all and more than anyone else annoyed him, she was naturally the chief victim of

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the child's ugly reactions and irritation. Henry was absolutely indifferent to his sister because the mother always held her up as a model of what Henry ought to be, regardless of the fact that the little sister, Grace, was of the very opposite type; was naturally a rather aggressive child, made friends easily and was ready at all times to lavish her affection and attention on people.

The mother was passionately devoted to Henry, she loved him perhaps even better than the little sister, was more than eager and willing to do everything for him; and though after my diagnosis she admitted the truth of Henry's condition, and realized that he needed very different treatment and relationship than what he had been getting at home, the mother did not have the necessary self-control, the patience and persistency to change her manner and her attitude toward Henry while he was entirely under her charge. For a period I had full charge of the boy.

*Recommendations.* First. I recommended that Henry be taken out of the school he was attending and sent for at least a brief period

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to a very small boarding-school, so that he could get away from his own home atmosphere where he was so little understood and where all his relations and associations meant much suffering. I was in intimate touch with the school, and on entering Henry I made the following requests of the principal and of the various teachers who were to be connected with Henry's work: I asked (a) to expect no response from Henry in the beginning; (b) to allow him, without paying noticeable attention to him personally or to his work, to find himself and to adjust himself to his new atmosphere. I felt certain that if he were let alone for a while, that if he felt assured that he was free from any pressure, he would more readily come out of himself; also, being in the atmosphere of a group of children more or less of his own age and capacity, he would be stimulated by them to do as well as they did.

Second. I recommended that as soon as Henry responded more freely he should be given a more frequent chance to take part in aggressive activities where his initiative would

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have a chance to be cultivated. For instance, he should be asked to read aloud, to tell a story to the class, to pass necessary materials in the class-room, to do an errand now and then — all these opportunities to be made so inconspicuous and so natural that Henry would not be conscious of the special training he was getting through these activities.

Third. I particularly asked to have him interested in all kinds of group games where his repressed social spirit would have a natural chance for expression and development — baseball, basket ball, tennis, etc.

Fourth. As soon as a more intimate relationship was established between Henry and his teachers, as soon as it was realized that he was becoming more relaxed, less tense and more approachable, I requested that the teacher who had become closest to him should make an opportunity during a walk or tramp to talk to Henry very simply and briefly and informally but directly on the point of how necessary it is to give as well as take in friendly intercourse, to acknowledge



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kindnesses, and to respond more readily to playmates — and to ask him plainly if he would not make more of an effort to take his part in such human relationships.

Fifth. In order that there should be no possible break or estrangement between the mother and Henry, I recommended that Henry should spend his Saturdays and Sundays at home. The absence of Henry for five days, and the joy of having him for those two brief days, would naturally help the mother to be more reasonable in her demands of Henry, and it would be possible for her to exercise more control of herself in her attitude toward Henry and her relation with him.

Note. Henry was originally a normal and very bright child. The chief problem with him was really the problem with those about him. If he had been understood in his earliest years, and if a special effort had been made to help him to overcome his shyness, his natural sensitiveness, he would never have been a problem, he would have been perfectly normal in his relationships with others. As soon as

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these deficiencies were overcome, there was indeed no problem with Henry. He had all the qualities for the making of a very unusual man.

### 5. AN IRRESPONSIBLE CHILD

*History.* Mary is eleven years old; the only child of well-to-do parents; of a tremendous physique, heavier than she should be at her age or with her frame. Mary was perfectly well at birth and the two years that followed. Between the ages of two and seven she had trouble with her eyes; was not allowed to use them in any way that required the slightest strain on them. During this period Mary was constantly waited upon and because of her disability was naturally indulged and humored frequently.

The parents reported that Mary had been discharged from several schools; had been found too great a problem to handle in a school; was utterly irresponsible and irresponsible, dependent on others for comforts and pleasures and for all physical things she should have done for herself. Stubborn to

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the point of exhaustion; backward in all mental work; careless about her person; clumsy with her body and incapable of using her hands with any degree of accuracy. "Neither kindness nor punishment affected her in any way," the mother stated.

*Diagnosis.* After a study of Mary I found that, except for a slight digestive trouble due chiefly to careless habits and improper diet, she was in excellent health. Remarkably strong, but utterly lacking in control both of mind and body. She had no control of her impulses, emotions, will; she had no power of concentration; she was utterly lacking in coördination, harmonious coöperation between her body and mind. All these faults and weaknesses in Mary, including her bad physical and mental habits, were due, first, to the indulgent treatment she had received during the five years she had been troubled with her eyes — when she was excused from all responsibility, was waited upon continually, and in consequence was led to expect the fulfilment of her desires at all times without any effort on her part.

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They were due, second, to lack of thoughtful discipline, and definite, persistent, regular training of her mind and body during the early years of her childhood.

*Recommendations.* First. I prescribed that Mary should be treated at home with a great deal more of thoughtful discipline than her present conduct indicated her having received. This did not mean that her life should in any way be made hard or uncomfortable, but that more responsibility for her own comforts and pleasures should depend upon herself. While there need be no visible program, her life — her physical habits, her work, her play, her rest — should be most carefully regulated. Only through *living* an orderly, regular existence could she acquire regular habits of thought and of action, could she acquire poise, balance and self-control.

Second. Mary's undisciplined, unorganized mind was so unaccustomed to following directions that it was under-developed, it was almost deficient — she was below the average child of her age in grasping ideas; therefore, in all relationships with Mary one had to be

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*simple and direct.* In expressing what is expected or required of her the statement should be made as brief and as much to the point as possible, so that there will be no chance for Mary to get a wrong impression of what she is expected to do. In correcting her mistakes the emphasis should not be laid on the mistake, but on *the correct way of doing the thing*. No attempt must be made to correct all her weaknesses at once. At first many of the minor details must be overlooked and only the important points emphasized. And mistakes should not, if possible, be corrected "in company"; this only tends to make the child self-conscious. But whenever possible the new lesson should be taught in a concrete way; for instance, at the supper table, you very simply say to Mary, "Mary, let me see how carefully you can put your sugar in your cocoa," — perhaps show her how you put your sugar in your cup without upsetting or splashing the cup's contents; and when Mary tries and succeeds make clear to her that she did it well and that it pleased you, and that you expect her at all times to

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do it in the right manner. Mary in many ways will learn like a very young child — by example, by imitation and repetition; therefore the simpler the form of presentation the quicker and pleasanter it will be for her to master the lesson. An effort should be always concrete and constructive in dealing with her.

Third. In all relationships with Mary conflicts must be avoided if possible; with forethought, this *can be done*. Every conflict causes a waste of nervous energy which Mary can not afford, and furthermore stimulates bad reactions in her, such as shouting, striking back, etc. Only just and reasonable demands should be made of her, but when such a demand is finally made it must be seen to that she obeys. Under no circumstances must she be yielded to, even though a most unpleasant hour may be the result, just because she persists in having her way. On the other hand, if her demand is just and reasonable, it should be promptly fulfilled — this to prove to her that it is your foremost desire to be just and kind to her. A special effort should be made to be very calm and

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quiet in speech and in manner toward Mary; by such constant examples of self-control she will be stimulated to control her impulsive, untrained, undisciplined nature.

Fourth. It is only natural and to be expected that Mary, in her present condition, would find it difficult to fit into any organized institution, any school or class, unless she were given individual attention all the time. I therefore suggest that for a period at least she be taken out of school and be put under the charge of a strong, intelligent, sympathetic person who would guide and direct Mary's life at home. (The mother in this case is too nervously worn to do this work.) Mary, on account of her weakened mental condition, will gain control of her faculties much quicker by practical living — by a well-regulated, normal, active existence during all her waking hours, than by a few hours of specialized work in any schoolroom. Moreover, because of her physical strength, better and quicker results can be secured by the training of her body rather than by centering efforts upon the immediate training of her mind.

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Fifth. I would suggest that part of her training should come through various household duties. For instance, (a) she should be taught to take complete care of her own room, making her bed, sweeping, dusting, etc.; (b) to set the table and wait on the table; (c) to cook simple dishes and occasionally prepare an entire meal (a supper); (d) the actual buying of various articles. These household duties would help her gain control of her body, would give her opportunity for general physical exercise, and furthermore would bring her in concrete relationship with the responsibilities and important questions of daily life—and also they would stimulate an orderly activity of the mind. Outside of this household work she should be given such manual work as weaving, basketry, modelling, carpentry, sewing, which would help her gain control over her more delicate muscles.

Mary's daily program might be somewhat like this:

Rise at about the same hour every morning;  
open her bed for airing; bathe (a cold bath



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every morning if possible); dress; breakfast (Mary should be required to eat what is good for her, regardless of her desire in the matter; the food should be put before her without comment and if she rebels it should be made clear to her *quietly* and *simply* that she can either take it or leave it, and if necessary let her skip that one meal; she will quickly learn that it is pleasanter to eat the right thing than to go without the meal); attend to her physical wants (with her present digestive trouble it should be required of her to be absolutely regular in attending to her needs); put her room in order; after which Mary and her companion should go out for a half hour's walk.

### Lessons.

First period. Manual work — weaving, basketry, modelling, etc. From the start the task must be simple enough to be completed in one sitting — this to cultivate the habit of concentration. The completion of a finished article will stimulate in the child a greater interest in the work and encourage her in doing it again.

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Second period. Reading. This lesson should be made interesting and alive. The story might be dramatized in a very simple way. The reading matter should be chosen on subjects that are more or less familiar to Mary.

Third period. Number work. This lesson should be made as concrete as possible. Perhaps add the amount of money Mary is to spend on various items at the grocer that day; to do some concrete measuring; or she might learn number work through games.

Note. The chief point about Mary's lessons should be: first, to avoid monotony and inactivity; second, to have them simple and brief, so that she would not get tired and lose interest in them.

### Lunch.

After lunch a period, perhaps of one hour, of rest. During this time Mary should be required to be quietly engaged by herself in her own room, doing anything she prefers — drawing, cutting out pictures, pasting pictures, sewing, etc. This period is chiefly to stimulate in her the habit of self-dependence.

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Outdoors. Part of this period should be aimed at using up Mary's over-abundance of energy in a constructive and pleasure-giving way. Unless that is done her energy will explode in destructive channels. Such vigorous physical exercise as skating, playing ball, jumping the rope, etc., would utilize her energy and also help her gain accurate control of her body. One or two afternoons a week Mary might have rhythmic work, gymnastics or dancing, under skilled direction.

Supper. Let there be definite evenings when Mary is held responsible for the setting of the table and in the helping to prepare that meal.

After supper there should be no strenuous, over-exciting, stimulating play or activity — a quiet talk, a story or a quiet game, all this to insure a restful night.

To bed.

Before stating my specific recommendations to the child's mother I tried to make very clear the following points, which I believe apply to every case:

First. That while it is possible in a com-

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paratively short time to make a general diagnosis of a child's condition and prescribe possible remedies, perceptible improvements in the child are likely to be very slow in coming.

Second. It must be remembered that in helping the child to gain control of himself where he previously had no control, many of his established, perhaps long established, bad habits and his misconceptions must be eradicated before he can acquire the new habits and ideas. Here time and patience are required.

Third. That only the consistent and persistent application of the new methods of training the child, and constant maintenance of the new attitude toward the child, can bring about the desired results; that spasmodic efforts aimed at correction will accomplish nothing. All the phases of the child's daily existence must be in harmony — as far as possible, the school and the home and the play periods must coöperate.

Fourth. Parents must realize that the child often pays for the parents' or other

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adults' weaknesses and faults, that before the parent can expect to see improvement in the child the parent must make an effort *to improve himself*. The parent must be honest with himself, see his own mistakes, control himself, before he can ask the same of the child.

## CHAPTER XV

### HOW TO KNOW YOURSELF

IN trying to save the waste in our children, in trying to correct their undesirable traits and habits, our effort, as I have sought to emphasize throughout this volume, should be directed toward treating causes and not to doctoring symptoms. We must look deep down behind the symptom, and if we look with honest, open eyes we will often find that the source of the disease — of the serious problem with our child which pains and shames us — lies within ourselves; that in reality we, parents, are the problems, not our children.

Out of the last hundred consecutive cases of individual children which have come to me as "problems", there were only two abnormal children. The ninety-eight who had been a source of pain, disappointment and even despair to their parents were at the bottom

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children with normal instincts, normal emotions, and many of them even with richly endowed natures and of unusual promise. There was not one in the ninety-eight whose problem could not have been avoided if his nature had been understood and properly directed by his parents, and, what is almost of equal importance, if his parents had only understood their own selves !

What we do not sufficiently realize is that the little child acquires his habits of life largely from us, his parents. Our children are to a large degree the reflectors, the imitators, of ourselves ; and if their habits are bad, if their characters are under-developed or mis-developed, if their conduct offends us and gives ominous promise of the future, it is in ourselves that we should look for at least some of the cause of their weaknesses and unfortunate tendencies.

Therefore, though I am making the matter the last chapter of this book, I may say that one of our very first problems is, How to Know Ourselves.

With our own selves ! Here in many cases

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is the place to begin saving the waste, to begin the correction of our children's faults. Hard as it may be for some of us to admit, nevertheless it is very often true that we parents, we mothers, despite of and because of our love and devotion, are responsible for many problems of childhood and for much of its needless waste. Sixteen years of intimate work with children, as well as with parents, have made this fact stand out in a most convincing way (this fact I have already stated in another part of the book, but it is so vital, so essential to a full appreciation of the subject in hand that I here consciously repeat it): Motherhood — mother love, however noble and willing and well-intentioned — is not enough to make the most of our children. The physical experience of motherhood, however wonderful and spiritually elevating, does not automatically equip the mother with a knowledge of the qualities of childhood and the best method of handling them, nor does it automatically give the mother a full knowledge of her own shortcomings, her own limitations, and also of her own powers.



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In making this statement concerning parents, I do not mean to imply that, where guilty, their guilt is necessarily intentional. Indeed, my personal experience with parents has convinced me of the very opposite. Most parents earnestly strive to do the very best for their children; I know only too well the constant self-sacrifices mothers make for their children. It is not a question of intention; it is a question of knowledge, and in the present discussion it is a question of self-knowledge.

This subject naturally divides itself into two heads: first, what are the faults or mal-developments or ignorances in ourselves of which we may be entirely unconscious, which may be the source of deplored faults in our children; and second, how are we to go about the business of discovering them; and, after these flaws have been recognized, how are we to attempt their eradication and how are we to go about the serious affair of a better self-development?

Most important of the two is the problem of self-analysis, or self-diagnosis. Do with yourself exactly as a good physician does:

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ask yourself questions, rigidly examine yourself. I can do no more than illustrate what I mean, for the character of this self-inquiry depends upon the problem of each individual child in each individual parent, and such problems vary in some degree with each person. But ask yourself, and answer yourself thoughtfully and honestly, such questions as the following :

When discord or a conflict arises, who at the beginning of the affair was truly to blame ?

When you refuse your child some request or some pleasure, is your refusal based upon justice and thoughtful consideration of what is best for the child, or is it based upon your own personal whim ? Is it because the child's desire would prove injurious, is in itself wrong, or is it because it would be easier for you not to have the child do what he desires, or because the request requires your co-operation, and you can not, or do not care, to enter into the child's spirit ?

Why do you give your child short, even sharp, non-informing answers, such as : "Don't bother me !" "I'm busy !" Is it because you are really seriously occupied ; or because you

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are lazy and self-indulgent; or do not care to interest yourself in a matter which may be vitally interesting to your child?

If you demand certain forms of "good conduct", such as obedience, respect, consideration, unselfishness, gratitude, have you always, by the character of your own behavior toward them, inspired them to respond in the desired manner?

When your child has the habit of going into a frightful temper, does the irritation which is the source of such fits lie chiefly within the child, or chiefly within yourself? If the latter, what is the character of that irritation and what its cause?

Do you take the physical care of yourself that your children deserve? Are you well? And if not, is your illness, mild or serious, due to causes which with exercise of will you could remove? Is your temper uncertain, your nerves shattered, because you have not respected the requirements of your own body? If your answer is in the affirmative, do not interpret my questions as an order to rush to your doctor; their intention is to suggest

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that you look after those details of health that every person can himself see to.

In this connection, ask, "Do I take mental care of myself? Am I a person who mentally belongs to today, a person in whom my wide-awake young children can take interest and find a comrade?"

Thus we may question ourselves indefinitely, our questions springing out of the apparent fault in our child and our relation to that fault. The foregoing questions may bring out to our knowledge some startlingly illuminating facts concerning ourselves; and the continuance of such self-examination may reveal to us further knowledge, which if at first disconcerting to our ego, should in the end prove most helpful to our child and ourselves. Perhaps we may discover that we have a disproportionately developed sense of order. In our love for order and peace and quiet we may demand adherence to our own standards from the child; we may be irritated by the child's violation of our desires, not realizing that the child's growing body demands activity, even though some measure of noise

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and disorder result from this unsuppressible instinct. And we may find that we have been reprimanding the child for his normal behavior, until we have finally planted in the child a sense of guilt and sowed in him the seed of deceit or rebellion.

We may find that we are not responsible, are irregular, forgetful with our children. And if one does not keep one's word with a child, one can not justly be surprised at any sort of behavior. Also our mere irregularity may lie behind the child's bad physical habits, his ill health, or his seeming inability to acquire any sense of order in his own life.

We may find that we have fallen into the practice, which gives a strange pleasure to some adults, of fooling with or teasing the child, to the child's bewilderment or irritation; or of making the child the easy butt of our sarcasms or witticisms which the child does not understand beyond knowing that he is hurt and shamed. In this connection, I wish to call attention to the sin of sins, — and that is humiliating the child whether by our adult sarcasms, or by rebuking the child in

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the presence of company for mistakes which he could not help, or by calling public attention to his shortcomings and imperfections. A child by such treatment may be turned into a very bomb of resentment, likely to explode at any time and in most amazing manner.

We may find that we have fallen into the habit, when something goes wrong with us, of taking it out on the child; by punishing him without reason, by suppressing him, by arbitrarily refusing his legitimate demands. We may find that we may have an overgrown respect for what other people think of our children and their behavior; that behind our entire attitude toward our children is that most conventional and disastrous of questions, "What will people say?" We may find that we have fallen into the habit of speaking in a loud, sharp way to the child, with the result that the imitative child speaks in the same manner to us, and, completing this little cycle, that we are outraged at such disrespect. We may find that we have slipped into the knowing-everything attitude toward our children, that we are unable ever to admit frankly

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"I don't know", with the result that our shrewd little children discover us for the frauds that we are and may hold us in secret, if not open, contempt.

There is hardly an end to such discoveries if we keep on with our self-exploration. Here is a case the like of which some mother, who starts out to become acquainted with her real self, may have to face and solve: a case which illustrates what may happen to the child because the mother has never given thought to the sort of person she is, and of the sort of mother it was potentially in her to be, though at the beginning of this particular experience I had no guess of what was to be my conclusion.

"Jennie has an absolutely vicious temper!" said a clever, well-to-do, affectionate mother in concluding a description of her child. "I can't imagine where she got it. I simply don't know what to do with her; she almost drives me crazy!"

After this unfavorable introduction, the ten-year-old daughter was brought in and given into my hands, with very severe in-

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structions that she was to try to be better than her usual self during her stay with me. I confess that it was with a great deal of trembling that I received her. To be sure, she was rather slight, and she did not look bad to me, though somewhat sullen; but after her mother's stories of her impertinence, obstinacy, capriciousness, paroxysms of rage, smashing of dishes and furniture, there was no guessing when, and what sort of, a domestic earthquake was going to break upon me.

We got on well together for a day; she was evidently upon her best behavior. Then the cataclysm came. The trifle that brought on the trouble was my request that she drink some milk, for she was under-nourished in consequence of having formed the habit of eating little. She replied that she never drank milk, that she hated it. I began to explain why she needed milk, and mildly insisted that she take some; whereupon her fury burst forth. She was not going to do anything she did not want to do! She shrieked, she stamped her feet, she pulled her hair, she flung herself kicking wildly



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upon a couch, then was up again snatching at things to destroy them. The mother's dark picture of her child seemed to me at that moment much too pleasantly drawn.

At first I hardly knew what to do. Then I decided to do nothing, and calmly finished my dinner, paying no attention whatever to her. I was conscious, though, that after a time she stole at me a look of surprise. During the evening I continued to ignore her; but at bedtime I pleasantly wished her "good night." She did not answer. The following morning I greeted her pleasantly, ignoring the event of the previous night. She answered in sullen monosyllables, but would eat no breakfast. During the morning whenever I spoke to her, I continued to speak in a pleasant tone, and she for her part maintained an almost unbroken silence. But I was again aware that she was stealing long, wondering looks at me.

Suddenly there was a second outburst of a very different sort. The thin little girl, without a word of warning, had thrown her arms about me and was wildly begging me

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to forgive her. I tried to quiet her, but she had launched into a sobbing confession of how bad she was,—a confession that included almost every sin that distracted parents are wont to charge against their children. But all unconscious to herself, she was doing something more than confess; she was giving me lightning-flash glimpses into the background of her life. And long before she was through, I knew that the guilty person was not this grief-stricken little penitent quivering in my arms. The real culprit was the clever, affectionate mother.

That mother, it was plain, had never tried to understand her daughter, and had never tried to understand her own self. The mother did not know that her child had imagination, high emotional power, ideas of her own, strength of will, and a fine self-respect. And the mother, partly through not knowing her child, and partly because (I emphasize this, since it is my present point) she *did not know her own self*, had turned her originally promising child into this apparently vicious

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little creature. It appeared that this loving mother, unconscious of the effect of what she was doing, had been in the habit of exercising her own temper on the child; had made it a habit arbitrarily, and without giving reason, to forbid whatever annoyed her or interfered with her own comfort, plans, or whims; and on occasions when the child was reluctant to obey, to coax, promise, threaten, and then in the end, and with equal reason or unreason, suddenly to punish the girl, or suddenly yield to the child's original desire.

In handling this case I had, so to say, to exchange my patients: I had frankly to tell the mother the truth, and that is not always a pleasant matter.

Here is another little incident which may help suggest to us certain things about ourselves which we have not yet discovered: an incident typical of significant occurrences that are happening in many families, and typical of frequent experiences in this particular child's life. A clever, intense boy of ten, as a reward for good work done in school, was promised a fountain pen by his father.

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On a certain fixed morning when he awoke he was to find the pen beside him. For days he was all expectancy; he talked chiefly of the pen, both at home and to his school-mates. His father was connected with a morning newspaper, which meant that he got to bed at about three and slept late. On the night before the appointed morning, the father came home with the pen in his pocket, but thoughtlessly went to bed without putting it where he had promised. When the boy awoke and found no pen, his disappointment was almost tragically acute. His every desire was fixed upon that pen; besides, he had been promising his school friends that he would show them his gift that morning. He waited impatiently, hoping every minute that his father would awaken. At length it was past his usual time for leaving for school; he could restrain his eagerness no longer, and entering his father's bedroom, he roused him and asked him for the pen. The father sprang out of bed in a passion at being disturbed in his sleep, and punished the boy severely. The child, taken by surprise, seeing

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no justice in this treatment, became violently enraged against his father. The matter did not end with that one outburst. Feeling that faith had not been kept with him, that his self-respect had been outraged by bodily punishment unjustly visited upon him, the boy withdrew into himself and maintained a silence, broken only by unavoidable monosyllables, and those resentful, against his father for months.

The father, an affectionate man, saw only that his child was at fault. He often complained of the boy's selfishness in awakening him, and of the perversity he was showing by his obstinate silence; and he also complained of other phases of the boy's ugliness of nature. In this case all the trouble, or at least its original cause, was due to the fact that this father had never stood off and taken a good look at his own self; to his failure to see that, despite his very real affection, he was, in matters relating to his boy, thoughtless and inconsiderate.

After this self-diagnosis which gives you knowledge of the faults which are injuriously

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influencing your child (and also, very likely, of unused good traits which might be developed to your child's great benefit), comes the second phase of our great problem: the eradication of faults, the rebuilding and reconstruction of ourselves. Here again I can only give a few suggestions, and leave the actual development of a method to each mother; for in every case the practical detailed method varies according to the character of the individual. Anyhow, once you have honestly examined yourself and found out what is the matter, the problem is three quarters solved, that is, if you only have the strength of will to stick to the obvious procedure.

As an illustration of procedure, here is the case of a mother who made the common complaint to me about the bad temper of her children. She was an intelligent woman of character; so I merely told her to examine herself, act according to her own common sense, and report to me the results. She later told me that she had found, after a study of herself, that she had by little things

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been irritating and provoking her children since their birth; that she had been impetuous and imperative. After this discovery concerning herself, she clearly saw that her problem was to control herself, and she acted upon this perception of her course. Her task, so far as it concerned her own self, was hard enough; but it was made more difficult by the wilfulness of the children she had spoiled. Her struggle required thought and infinite patience. She hit upon the device of, so to speak, declaring an armistice at the very instant she saw civil war was about to break forth. "Please leave me alone for five minutes," she would say to her children; or she would herself walk out of their presence. That interval was enough to give the mother a chance to regain her slipping self-control, and was also enough to let the flaring rebellion of the children subside; and when they all met again, they were able to talk calmly and with reason. This mother informed me that, by her own effort, she had cured herself of the fault that had been poisoning her children; and that her old troubles

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with her children had practically ceased to exist.

One very able, honest, and conscientious mother stated to me, after a careful study of herself and her relations with her children: "I am high-tempered, irritable and arrogant; positive, impulsive and vacillating. I have come to the conclusion that lack of sympathy is the keynote to all my difficulties. I experience primarily a feeling of irritation when my children hurt themselves. And yet I have a deep sense of the responsibility of parenthood; I feel that I have a great debt to discharge; but how am I going to discharge it unless I can get very close to my children's hearts, and can make them love and trust me? Can sympathy be cultivated, and how?"

My answer to this mother may perhaps have suggestive value to many others. In substance I said that a person who perceived so clearly and intelligently her own shortcomings, certainly had the intelligence and ability to take hold of herself and her problem. Your first effort, I stated, should be to gain your children's friendship. Only such a rela-



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tionship can make work with them possible and bring satisfactory results. The simplest way to establish a sincere companionship between one's self and one's children is to be simple, reasonable, direct, frank, absolutely honest in all relationships with them. I suggest that you start that relationship through a period of play with them. If you have not been in the habit of playing with them, the children may at first be surprised, but you will be astonished to find how quickly and willingly they will accept such a new attitude toward them. Spirited games with your children, throwing yourself soul and body into their life, proving to them that you appreciate their pleasures, their keen desire for activity and play, will bring them closer to you than any amount of preaching or teaching or conventional threats and rewards. After you have established that comradeship between them and yourself, all your relationships will grow smoother, the children will open themselves more freely to you, they will respond more quickly to your requests and wishes, you will gain a firmer

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hold on them, and you will find naturally developing in yourself that spontaneity and sympathy whose absence you deplore.

Yes, it is a tremendous task to be a good parent! If not the hardest, certainly it is the most important work in the world. And this book is in no sense a formula for making childhood problemless or parenthood without a care. I recognize fully that it is a very difficult undertaking to undo habits that for years have been growing upon us and growing to be a part of us; that it requires patience and endurance—and again patience. But it does seem to me, when we honestly and calmly think of the ultimate result—changing an unhappy, unsatisfied, irritable existence into an active, fruitful, joyous life, full of promise and hope, a life so full of interest that we look forward to every day with renewed happiness and renewed energy—it does seem to me, with such a prospect ahead, that any effort is worth the making.

Many mothers will admit that it is they who are in the wrong, that they are the prob-

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lems or are the causes of their children's problems; but, though still comparatively young, they will brush the whole affair aside, thus hopelessly ending it, by saying, "It is too late, I can not make myself over." With such a mother I have little sympathy. Any woman who has enough intelligence to perceive and admit her own faults, has the intelligence and the will (though the latter may be dormant) to improve upon herself in some degree.

But if there are any mothers who feel themselves so settled and unchangeable in their admittedly mal-forming ways that my words have no value to them and can serve them in no manner, then at least I hope that whatever of good I have written in this chapter and in this volume, will be both warning and inspiration to the young mother who is just entering upon, and accepting the responsibilities of the greatest career in the world, — parenthood; that she will look upon herself, not as a completely formed and finished product, but will see herself as almost at the beginning of her larger development;

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that she will start out to discharge her great task and her high privilege with humility, patience, and open-mindedness, ready to gaze honestly at herself and her actions, ready to throw aside old, outworn ideas and conventions, just as she would discard worn-out, useless clothes: in brief, ready to grow and develop with her responsibility, ready to grow with the growth of her little child, who is her tiny fraction of that finer human race which it is to be the mission and glory of an enlightened motherhood to bear and mould.